

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Judges 17

We are continuing our verse by verse study through the book of Judges

We are going to do two chapters today – I mentioned that Sunday – so hopefully you guys read them.

There are a few things I want to make sure to point out before we begin this evening.

The first thing is that these last five chapters in the book of Judges are not in chronological order.

These things didn't happen after the death of Samson

These were events that were occurring during the period of the judges.

The next very important thing I want us to consider as we read these final chapters is that the enemy is no longer external.

For the first 16 chapters, we have seen the different peoples that came to oppress the Israelites

Ammonites - Jephthah

Amalekites

Midianites – Gideon

Philistines – Samson

And there were a few other ites that oppressed them

These last chapters – it is the same Israelites that oppress their own people.

What these five chapters teach us is how wicked we can become when we turn our backs to the Lord.

One of the phrases that we are going to see several times over the next few weeks is -

[Jdg 17:6 NKJV] 6 In those days [there was] no king in Israel; everyone did [what was] right in his own eyes.

The author is not referencing that the fact that they didn't have a physical king –

He meant that the Israelites had rejected God's governance over them.

God was supposed to be their king – Deut 33:5 tells us that

But they rejected their king and did whatever they wanted – whatever felt good.

Just like today –

So in these chapters, we are going to see the consequences of this.

Let's pray...

[Jdg 17:1-13 NKJV] 1 Now there was a man from the mountains of Ephraim, whose name [was] Micah.

Just want to point out that this is a different Micah than the one who wrote the book of Micah.

The name Micah means, "Who is like God?"

And one of the things that we learn really quickly is that this Micah character doesn't really live up to his name.

2 And he said to his mother, "The eleven hundred [shekels] of silver that were taken from you, and on which you put a curse, even saying it in my ears--here [is] the silver with me; I took it." And his mother said, "[May you be] blessed by the LORD, my son!"

Micah made the choice to steal from his mother.

He actually took 1100 shekels of silver.

He stole a fortune.

The mother at first, realizing that her money was gone – pronounces a curse on whoever took it.

Micah hears her pronounce the curse and returns the money – and the mother instead of taking out the chancla – she decides to bless her son.

No discipline at all

And one of the things that we see really quick is that this family is very superstitious.

Putting on curses – reversing curses

Everyone is doing their own thing.

3 So when he had returned the eleven hundred [shekels] of silver to his mother, his mother said, "I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son, to make a carved image and a molded image; now therefore, I will return it to you."

There are a few problems here.

The Law required Micah to add a fifth to what he had stolen. The text only tells us that he gave her back the 1100 shekels

Another problem is that the mom wants to take a portion of the silver and make two images to give to her son. She is breaking the 2nd commandment right

(Ex 20:4–5 NKJV) —4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God...

4 Thus he returned the silver to his mother. Then his mother took two hundred [shekels] of silver and gave them to the silversmith, and he made it into a carved image and a molded image; and they were in the house of Micah.

In verse three, the mother said she was going to set apart all the silver that her son returned and have the images made –

his mother said, "I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son

However, notice that she only takes 200 of the 1100 shekels.

So it appears that Micah had learned his thieving ways at home, from his mom.

5 The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

The Jews were supposed to worship at one central location – at the Tabernacle, where the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat were.

(the temple doesn't get built until Solomon later on)

So they were supposed to go to the Tabernacle –

And during this time, the Tabernacle was located in Shiloh – which was located in Ephraim, in Micah's back yard.

But Micah is setting up a place of worship in his house and he is also making one of his sons – a priest, which is a no-no because all the priests had to be descendants of Aaron.

So just in these first five verses, this household already broke at least 8 of the ten commandments – without leaving their home.

6 In those days [there was] no king in Israel; everyone did [what was] right in his own eyes.

Someone might look at Micah and his mom and say – wait a minute, they just wanted to worship God.

Here is the thing -

God had clearly given them laws to tell them how He was to be worshipped.

But they are either ignorant of those laws, or they are willfully choosing to ignore those laws.

We are living in a society today that is very similar.

We have eliminated any sort of basis for what is right and wrong.

Our world's philosophy is now – “If it feels good, do it”.

When our moral compass should be God's Word.

7 Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah; he [was] a Levite, and was staying there.

Now, in order to understand verse 7 – we must first remember that the Levites received no inheritance of land.

They were supposed to live in 48 cities distributed throughout the tribes of Israel – to minister to the people about God – and Bethlehem was not one of them.

8 The man departed from the city of Bethlehem in Judah to stay wherever he could find [a place]. Then he came to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.

Not only were the Levites supposed to stay in those cities – they were supposed to live off the sacrifices and offerings of the people

However, this Levite (who by the way, we find out his name is Jonathan) – has made himself a priest for hire.

9 And Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?" So he said to him, "I [am] a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am on my way to find [a place] to stay."

10 Micah said to him, "Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten [shekels] of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance." So the Levite went in.

So Micah sees Jonathan – finds out he is a priest for hire, not only is he a priest for hire – he is from the wrong town (red flags)

But Micah hires him anyways -

The term “Be a father” meant that Jonathan would advise Micah on spiritual things.

Keep in mind that Jonathan is already doing whatever he wants – not following God’s Word – plus, now Micah is going to support him – which means Jonathan is not going to say anything about the idols and images in Micah’s house.

Micah is only going to hear what he wants to hear.

Unfortunately, this is what happens in many churches

They tell people what they want to hear – because they don’t want to leave.

Church -

That is why it is important to go through the entire Word of God.

Verse by verse.

Teaching all of it – not just the parts we like. (Word of God is not a buffet)

Another thing that is important is that the Word of God must challenge us. It must expose us, and then direct and redirect us.

11 Then the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man became like one of his sons to him. 12 So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and lived in the house of Micah. 13 Then Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!"

I want to remind you that Micah – before this guys showed up, he had already made his own son priest (back in verse 5)

Not any more right?

As long as Micah kept supporting him, Jonathan was going to continue to tell Micah what he wanted to hear.

And here we see his religious superstition again in verse 13, he is using Jonathan as a good luck charm

And I think there is a valuable application for us –

Whenever we say or have the following thought - “Now I know that the Lord will be good to me, since _____.”

It is religious superstition – just like Micah.

[Jdg 18:1-31 NKJV] 1 In those days [there was] no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for itself to dwell in; for until that day [their] inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen to them.

After leading the Israelites into the Promised Land, they were told by God, “Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses” (Joshua 1:3).

In that faith, they were to conquer the enemies in the land.

Joshua had led them to decisive, major victories.

But it was up to each tribe to finish the job and destroy or kick out the ites that lived in their land.

Now, in ch 1 of the book of Judges, we learned that the Amorites controlled the land that was given to Dan – in fact, instead of kicking out the Amorites, the tribe of Dan was forced to settle up in the mountains.

So here, 300 years later – instead of obeying God and conquer their enemies by faith, they come up with their own solution.

2 So the children of Dan sent five men of their family from their territory, men of valor from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and search it. They said to them, "Go, search the land." So they went to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there.

So they didn't want to walk by faith and conquer the Amorites – it was too hard.

So they decided to send people to look for other land.

And as they went to look for other land, they come across the house of Micah

3 While they [were] at the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite. They turned aside and said to him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this [place]? What do you have here?" 4 He said to them, "Thus and so Micah did for me. He has hired me, and I have become his priest."

As they were at Micah's house, they heard a familiar voice – Jonathan – the poser priest.

I want you think about this – Jonathan as well as these men, they are doing the same thing – they have abandoned their territory to find something easier.

5 So they said to him, "Please inquire of God, that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous." 6 And the priest said to them, "Go in peace. The presence of the LORD [be] with you on your way."

First of all, this is not spiritual.

There was one place to "inquire of God" and that was at the Tabernacle.

There's no way God could have given this answer, because their "journey" was wrong from the get-go.

Jonathan is telling these guys what they want to hear – just like Micah.

7 So the five men departed and went to Laish. They saw the people who [were] there, how they dwelt safely, in the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure. [There were] no rulers in the land who might put [them] to shame for anything. They [were] far from the Sidonians, and they had no ties with anyone.

So the five spies they go to Laish – they see that the inhabitants are peaceful and secure – they were the opposite of the Amorites.

8 Then [the spies] came back to their brethren at Zorah and Eshtaol, and their brethren said to them, "What [is] your [report]?" 9 So they said, "Arise, let us go up against them. For we have seen the land, and indeed it [is] very good. [Would] you [do] nothing? Do not hesitate to go, [and] enter to possess the land. 10 "When you go, you will come to a secure people and a large land. For God has given it into your hands, a place where [there is] no lack of anything that [is] on the earth."

First of all, God was not giving the Danites anything.

They were going to take it, and invoke the name of God.

It was blasphemy

11 And six hundred men of the family of the Danites went from there, from Zorah and Eshtaol, armed with weapons of war. 12 Then they went up and encamped in

Kirjath Jearim in Judah. (Therefore they call that place Mahaneh Dan to this day. There [it is], west of Kirjath Jearim.) 13 And they passed from there to the mountains of Ephraim, and came to the house of Micah. 14 Then the five men who had gone to spy out the country of Laish answered and said to their brethren, "Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod, household idols, a carved image, and a molded image? Now therefore, **consider what you should do.**"

So they assemble troops and on the way up, they are coming to Micah's house – and they want to steal his silver idols and images.

I had you make a note of the phrase, consider what you should do

Because these Danites – that was one thing they weren't doing. They were abandoning their inheritance / disobeying God.

15 So they turned aside there, and came to the house of the young Levite man-- to the house of Micah--and greeted him. 16 The six hundred men armed with their weapons of war, who [were] of the children of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate. 17 Then the five men who had gone to spy out the land went up.

Entering there, they took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image. The priest stood at the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men [who were] armed with weapons of war. 18 When these went into

Micah's house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" 19 And they said to him, "Be quiet, put your hand over your mouth, and come with us; be a father and a priest to us. [Is it] better for you to be a priest to the household of one man, or that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?" 20 So the priest's heart was glad; and he took the ephod, the household idols, and the carved image, and took his place among the people.

So not only do they rob Micah of all his idols – they also take his priest.

And for Jonathan, he saw it as a promotion – he was more than willing to go along.

Instead of being the priest of one house – he is going to become priest to a tribe.

It was a promotion, but it was a worldly one, not a godly one.

Promotion needs to come from the Lord - and that means it has to be in accordance with godliness.

21 Then they turned and departed, and put the little ones, the livestock, and the goods in front of them.

They took some of Micah's kids as well.

These guys keep sinking deeper and deeper into sin.

22 When they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men who [were] in the houses near Micah's house gathered together and overtook the children of Dan. 23 And they called out to the children of Dan. So they turned around and said to Micah, "What ails you, that you have gathered such a company?"

So Micah gathers guys to get his kids back and his stuff – and when they catch up to the Dannites – the Dannites are outraged that Micah has come after them.

They don't see anything wrong in what they are doing -

24 So he said, "You have taken away my gods (by the way – it's pretty bad when someone can steal your gods) which I made, and the priest, and you have gone away. Now what more do I have? How can you say to me, 'What ails you?' " 25 And the children of Dan said to him, "Do not let your voice be heard among us, lest angry men fall upon you, and you lose your life, with the lives of your household!"

“Micah – you better turn around and go home or else we are going to kill you”

They are bullies -

26 Then the children of Dan went their way. And when Micah saw that they [were] too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house. 27 So they took [the things] Micah had made, and the priest who had belonged to him, and went to Laish, to a people quiet and secure; and they struck them with the edge of the

sword and burned the city with fire. 28 [There was] no deliverer, because it [was] far from Sidon, and they had no ties with anyone. It was in the valley that belongs to Beth Rehob. So they rebuilt the city and dwelt there.

The end result was murder; mass murder.

What began as a simple act of disobedience started an avalanche of sin resulting in the mass murder of innocent people.

What's even worse is that the Jews were to be an example to the Gentiles, leading them to convert to Judaism.

They ought to have come to Laish as missionaries – and not as murderers.

29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born to Israel. However, the name of the city formerly [was] Laish. 30 Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. 31 So they set up for themselves Micah's carved image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

We started our study this evening with the idolatry in one house –

And now, that idolatry has spread to an entire nation.

Turn to Deut 12

[Deu 12:5-8 NKJV] 5 "But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. 6 "There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. 7 "And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which the LORD your God has blessed you. 8 "You shall not at all do as we are doing here today--every man doing whatever [is] right in his own eyes--

When Israel first settled into the Promised Land, the “sanctuary” was in Shiloh.

Except for the tribe of Dan.

They did their own thing.

When Solomon’s son Rehoboam took the throne, the northern tribes rebelled against Rehoboam, and Jeroboam set up some alternate worship sites, including one in Dan.

Dan is an example of man wanting to “worship”, but wanting to do it on his own terms, in his own way.

So what can we learn about these two chapters?

If there is one take-away from today, it's this word, and this concept, of objectivity.

We have the inspired, authoritative Word of God - the Bible.

In it we find everything we need for life and for godliness.

If God says it, I am to believe it - even if it does not sit well with me, or is contrary to what I feel, or what I want to do.

His Word ought to settle the matter. No matter how much pressure I feel from myself or from the world to do what is right in my own eyes, I must go with God's assessment.

Further, I must understand and believe that what God commands,

He enables me to do.

It isn't by my will power that I obey the Word of God, but by His empowering through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

All the things for life and godliness are set out in Scripture; and I can do all those things through Jesus, Who strengthens me.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'