

Sunday Night Message

December 30, 2018

Judges 17

Series – *Judges*

Text – Judges 17

Introduction

The remaining chapters of the Book of Judges do not introduce us to any new judges. Nor do they necessarily advance any chronological narrative. But, they do reveal some things that happened in Israel during the period of the Judges that show us the spiritual condition of the people during much of this time in their history. These chapters are an appendix of sorts.

In chapter 17 and 18, we see a picture into a very apostate time in Israel's period of Judges. We see apostate religion, which brings a breakdown in the family life within Israel, which will then affect the morality of a nation. We see this same pattern in our nation today. The decay of our nation was caused by a collapse of the home, which was a result of the corruption of religion. "As goes the church, so goes the home. As goes the home, so goes the nation."

The key verses to this chapter and the next are v. 16 and 18:1:

"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." (Judges 17:6)

"In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel." (Judges 18:1)

The story that is contained in chapters 17 and 18 is reminiscent of the wild west. It is survival of the fittest. Lawlessness prevails, both spiritually and militarily. Chapter seventeen reveals the spiritual condition of the period, while chapter 18 shows us how one tribe – the tribe of Dan – will move an army about one hundred miles to the north and attack a peaceful city in order to occupy it.

"The nation that once marched triumphantly through Canaan to the glory of God now disintegrates morally and politically and brings disgrace to His name. But what else can you expect when there is "no king in Israel" and the people are flouting the laws of God?"¹



¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1994). Be available (p. 127). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

There are two characters that are front and center to both of these chapters – Micah and a Levite from Bethlehem Judah who is un-named in chapter 17, but revealed to be named Jonathan in chapter 18.

I Micah Pilfers His Mother's Money (vs. 1 – 2)

Micah, who appears to be as spoiled rotten as Samson was, stole 1100 pieces of silver from his mother.

The amount of silver here was the same amount that we discussed in chapter 16 in relation to the Philistine princes and Delilah. It was about 27.5 pounds of silver, which is worth about \$6,000.00 in today's money.

His mother, not knowing who stole it, pronounced a curse on whoever did. Micah gets nervous that the curse might come true, so he confesses. His mom should have taken him over her knee, but instead she thanks him and then does some spiritual back-pedaling and promises to dedicate the money to the Lord.

You will note that the money was used for idolatry, and it was not at all apparent to anybody involved that idolatry was wrong. Apparently, there was very little knowledge of the Word of God in the family of Micah, and perhaps throughout the entire nation.

2 Kings 22:8 – 23 – Note – America is rapidly becoming just as Bible ignorant as the people were in Josiah's day.

II Micah's Mother Pays For a Molten Image (vs. 3 – 4)

She sends 200 pieces of the silver to have an idol made, which ends up in the house of Micah.

III Micah Appoints What He Pleases (vs. 5 – 6)

See Exodus 28: 5 – 14 regarding the Ephod.

IV Micah Anoints Who He Pleases (vs. 7 – 13)

Jonathan was from Bethlehem Judah, which was not one of the Levitical cities, and he was travelling looking for a good place to stay. He was a vagrant of sorts. He was supposed to be serving God's people and living within one of the cities appointed for the Levites. Perhaps, God's people were no longer supporting the Levites.

We find out in Judges 18:30 who this Levite is. It is very confusing. He is said to be a Levite, but is also a son of Manasseh, and from the family of Judah. It could be that he had mixed parentage, or it could be that the Manasseh and Judah were names of people in Levi, but not a reference to the tribes themselves. Though he was a Levite, he may not have been from the family of Aaron, which were the only ones authorized to be priests. The other families of the Levites were servants in the Tabernacle and later, in the Temple.

10 shekels equals 4 ounces or 110 grams, which is about \$50 today. Not a very lucrative job prospect, but since he was homeless, it was better than nothing. Plus, it included "three hots and a cot." He was nothing more than a "hireling", however. He was a hired preacher, and he was willing to compromise everything he should have been taught in order to serve as a private priest for Micah.

Conclusion

Micah effectively made up his own religion, which had some resemblance of Judaism, but also included pagan rituals and idolatry as well.

See 2 Timothy 3:1 – 9

Does Christianity today truly follow the Bible or are we, like Micah, making it up as we go. Are we discarding practices from our faith that God did not discard? Are we adding things to our system of belief that are nowhere to be found in the Word of God?

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Introduction

Summarize all of chapter 17.

Remember the key phrase of both chapter 17 and 18 is from 17:6: "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." (Judges 17:6; also 18:1) It was a lawless time, a time when everybody was doing their own thing. Not only was there no earthly king yet, there were no strong judges either, and the people were far away from God.

In chapter 18, the tribe of Dan is looking to move northward and claim some territory from the Zidonians. The city of Laish was a very peaceful and careless village that was a relatively easy conquest for them:

The tribe of Dan was unsuccessful in taking all of the territory that was given them from the Lord. The Amorites were too powerful for them, which means their faith in God was weak, because God promised all of Israel total victory over their enemies. (See Joshua 1:1 – 9)

What happened to Dan. They failed, either because of a lack of faith, or a love for the forbidden:

"And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley:" (Judges 1:34)

I suppose it is only fair to point out that Dan was not alone in their failure to inherit all of the land given to them; other tribes failed as well, but perhaps none to the extent that Dan failed. The Amorites had actually driven the tribe of Dan up into the mountains. Apparently, the enemies that were occupying their land were still too strong for them, so they decided to look for some easy pickings.

"And the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them: therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, (same as Laish in Judges 18) and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages." (Joshua 19:47-48)

Dan didn't want to fight for what God gave them. They wanted what somebody else had.

Perhaps, because of their extreme northern geographical position, Dan became isolated from the rest of Israel, and thus became estranged from Israel's faith.

I **The Danite Delegation Consult with Micah's Priest (vs. 1 – 6)**

The Danites are looking for a new territory to live in because they were having too tough a time with the Amorites back where they come from. God had given them the land to the south. They needed to conquer the land that God gave them, even if the giants were big and the enemies were strong. They wanted to do something easier.

Note – Don't look for an easier situation than God's perfect will for your life. God's will for Dan was the land that the Amorites took from them. God's will for your life may be hard or difficult at times, but the way of the transgressor is a lot harder.

The Danites seek advice from the hireling priest, and he does what hirelings do – he tells them what they want to hear. There is no mention of Jonathan seeking the Lord, but he advises these Danites like he just heard from God.

Note – seek advice from people who love you enough to tell you the truth, and who are faithful enough to really pray and seek God on your behalf.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." (Proverbs 27:6)

"Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16)

II The Danites Conclude to Take Laish (7 – 12)

Laish was a secure place, in that it was a place that had any enemies. It didn't even have a magistrate. The people at Laish were peaceful and "careless," meaning that they didn't have any cares. It was also a very fruitful place. Laish was going to be easy for the Danites to conquer. They could not conquer the Amorite in their own territory, so they went after these peaceful people. The people of Laish were heathen people, but they seem to be better people than the Danites.

Practical Point – Don't get so careless that you don't see the possibility of an enemy attack.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

III The Danites Conspire to Steal Micah's Priest (vs. 13 – 20)

On their way back to Laish with the army, the Danites stop on the way to pick up Micah's priest, along with his ephod, terephim, and a graven image.

The ephod was a two-piece sleeveless vest of sorts, worn by priests. (See Exodus 28:6 – 14) Gideon made an ephod that the people began to worship:

"And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house." (Judges 8:27)

David would also enquire of God through Abiathar's ephod. (1 Samuel 30:7)

The graven image was the same one that Micah's mother had made back in chapter seventeen with the money that her son had stolen from her, and then returned after she placed a curse upon whoever stole it. A graven image was a carved piece of wood overlaid with gold or silver.

The teraphim was probably the molten image that Micah's mother had made back in chapter 17:3 – 5. A molten image was made of metal poured into a mold. Most of the time in the Bible, the word "teraphim" is translated "images." Don't confuse teraphim with seraphims or cherubims, which are both orders of angels.

The Danites should not want to have anything to do with either Micah's priest or his idols, but they are not trusting in God. They are superstitious. They are mixing the faith of their fathers with the religion of the heathen that surrounded them. They are really no different from the rest of their world. What a shame.

By the way, notice that Micah's priest – the hireling – is willing to work for whoever pays him the most. He is not following God, either.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." (John 10:11-14)

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Peter 5:1-4)

Money should not be a factor in ministry. We do what we do because God wants us to do it; not because we are getting paid for it.

IV Micah Complains But is Powerless (vs. 21 – 26)

Micah is being robbed, but he is powerless to do anything about it. Remember, he robbed from his own mother back in chapter 17, so he is reaping what he sowed. Micah is a godless Ephraimite himself, and he is now being oppressed by the godless tribe of Dan.

Remember the key to these chapters – everybody is doing that which is right in their own eyes.

"In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21:25)

There are no rules. There are no principles. There is no Bible that people are following. America is becoming more and more like Israel in this time. Godless and lawless.

V The Danites Conquer Laish (vs. 27 – 31)

The Danites take their good luck charms and travel north to a peaceful city, and utterly destroy them. They call the place "Dan." It becomes even more of an idolatrous place than when it was controlled by the heathen people of Laish.

Dan was known for its idolatry throughout its history. (See Judges 18:30 – 31)

"Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan." (1 Kings 12:28-30)

Note – "until the day of the captivity of the land" - This could be referring to the Assyrian captivity when all of the northern kingdom was carried away into Assyria, which would take place in 722 B. C. (2 Kings 15:29; 17:1 – 6); since Shiloh is mentioned, it is possible that the reference here is to the capture of the ark of the covenant by the Philistines from Shiloh in the days of Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phineas. (1 Samuel 4:11)

Conclusion

How can God's people avoid the problems of Israel. Don't do what is right in your eyes. Do what is right in God's eyes, and recognize that our King is Jesus.