

Judges Ch 17-18

Ch 16 ends what we would consider the historical portion of the book of Judges regarding the chronological aspects of it. So far the book of Judges has taken us from the time of Joshua's death up to the time of Samson revealing to us that ever present attitude of the children of Israel during this time of their history. That sin cycle, or pattern that nation can't seem to pull out of, they would indulge in sin and the worship of pagan idols which would lead to their enslavement or servitude of a particular nation. The enslavement leading to supplication, crying out again to God for deliverance, which would bring their salvation in the form of a Judge or a leader of the nation. One whom God would raise up to deliver the nation from the bondage and oppression of the enemy, then there would be a season of silence whereby the nation would again fall into sin. And the whole cycle would begin again, sin, servitude, supplication, salvation and silence. And that's the pattern we see all throughout the book of Judges, and it's quite truthfully a profound example for us to learn from because how often that parallels our own lives. We find ourselves toying with sin, which leads us to enslavement by that sin, which opens our eyes to the need for deliverance from that sin, we see how we've forsaken the true and living God in order to indulge the flesh and then we've become a slave to the flesh and it's a wicked taskmaster that forces us to serve with rigor and hard bondage. And when we find ourselves in dire straits we cry out to God Who being rich in grace and mercy restores us once again unto Himself and then what happens? We say, "Thanks God we'll take it from here." And then we start all over again, and we never really learn our lesson, you know God didn't put these accounts in the scriptures so that we can see how they really screwed up. 1 Cor 10:11-12 "*Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*" You see these things were recorded for us for *our* rebuke, so that we might learn from their mistakes, so that we are with out excuse. They had to learn as they went along, but we have the advantage in that we have them to serve as a pattern for our lives, what's acceptable to God, and what isn't, what pleases Him, and what doesn't, what gains His favor, and what brings about His chastening. These things were recorded for our benefit and so far we've seen this problem from the days just after the death of Joshua, right up until the time of Samson, now chronologically Samuel comes on the scene next and God uses his life to really set some things in order, but in ch's 17 through 21 we have what would really be an appendix to the book. And it reflects to us the moral condition and spiritual confusion that the nation of Israel was in following the time of Joshua. And this particular event in ch's 17 and 18 seem to have taken place in the time immediately following the time of Joshua and I'll show you why when we get there. So here at ch 17 it's necessary to sort of shift gears in your mind so as not to think that what happens next is what happened after Samson's life. But rather this takes us back to the time immediately following Joshua and reveals to us the state of spiritual confusion and moral deprivation and degradation in the nation. It's thought that the reason that the author includes this particular event right after Samson's story is because it deals with the tribe of Dan, which as you know is the tribe that Samson came from. So we read in Ch 17 beginning in vs 1.

Vs1-4

So already we're beginning to see the utter state of confusion that the people of Israel are in. Relating idolatry to the worship of God, thievery, superstition, and theological contradiction. Micah seems to be a man who wanted riches, religion and respectability, but as we'll see, in the end he'll lose all 3 because he's not leading his life by God's standards, but by his own.

The name "Micah" means "who is like the Lord" or "who is like God", but in his case his name contradicted his character because Micah was a thief. And he manages to break the vast majority of the 10 commandments in a relatively brief portion of scripture, but it would appear as though he didn't have exactly the most godly of examples in his mother either. She's the one that led him right into idolatry in the name of the Lord, and it's unfortunately fairly common that parents want their children to be of godly character or upright in their moral standards but in reality they're fairly pathetic examples to them in and of themselves. If you want your children to be godly, then give them a godly example, if you want your kids to be of high moral standards, then set those standards in your own life, if you want them to study the word of God, then study it yourself. But to often we add to their confused position in life by the examples we set, even in the name of good intentions because we don't know the word of God ourselves. So how can we encourage them in godly actions and attitudes if we ourselves don't even know what they are? And we see that in his mother, now to back track just a bit what we have happening here is a man who apparently wanted to be rich himself and the easiest way to obtain it was to rip off mom and the proverbs speak of the sin of ripping off mom and dad, Jesus spoke of the reproach of ripping off your parents in Matt ch 15. But what's happened here is that he saw a way to make a small fortune and so he takes this money from his mother, now just to give you an idea of how much 1100 shekels of silver would have been worth, you can take note of vs 10 where Micah offers a priest 10 shekels of silver per yr and that seems to be a fairly lucrative offer. So if 10 shekels of silver reflected a decent annual salary, 1100 would be 110 yrs worth of wages, so a pretty good chunk. If you make 30,000 a yr this would be an equivalent of 3.3million dollars handed to you if you make 40 then it would be to you 4.4 million, so you see how much this was and apparently how wealthy his mom was, if he could take 1100 shekels and hope that she not miss it or whatever then she was pretty well off. This also gives you an idea of the type of wages offered to Delilah to find out Samson's weakness and hand him over to the Philistines, she was offered 5,500 pieces of silver (so several million dollars). But when Micah's mom realizes the money is gone she places a curse on whoever took it and she let her boy know what she had done. Well, Micah fearing the curse said, "Uh, mom you remember that curse you put on whoever took your money, well, it was me, here it is you can have it back." Now did she reprimand him for his behavior? No, she blessed him, she was all, "May you be blessed of the Lord my son." Seeking to somehow neutralize the curse by pronouncing now a blessing, and so we have cursing and blessing coming out of the same mouth, what did James say? "*Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.*"

That's like clean and polluted water coming out of the same well, it can't happen and yet we do it, and that's what she is doing here, Col 4:6 says, "*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*" And in vs 3 we see why she was so upset that the silver was gone, it was because it was money that she had dedicated to the Lord (and note that she said that it was *wholly* dedicated to the Lord), but here in lies the revelation of the confusion. She had dedicated it to the Lord, but for the purpose of making a carved image and a molded image to aid him in his worship. The carved image being something carved out of wood overlaid with silver and the molded image being solid silver that's melted down and poured in a mold. Why would she do this? She's unlearned in the scriptures, she thinks it would be good for her boy, it would remind him that God is always near him and around him.

And yet God has expressly said, "*You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or 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; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God.*" Ex 20:4-5

And again in Ex 20:23, "*You shall not make anything to be with Me--gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves.*" You see it's important to note that she wasn't seeking to rebel against God, or lead him away from the Lord in pagan worship, but she wasn't wise concerning what the scriptures taught and so she's leading him down the path of heresy and idolatry. Anytime you need something to remind you of the presence of God, that indicates a loss of consciousness regarding the presence of God in your life, therefore you need something to remind you of that which you were once keenly aware of. They were a religious family, but unfortunately it's not about religion, it's about a relationship with God, which was lacking in their lives and as a result all sorts of twisted things evolved. So Micah gave back the silver and in vs 4 she took 200 shekels to the silversmith to make these images (some believe the images were replicas of the articles of the tabernacle) but what struck me was the fact that she dedicated all of it to the Lord but then only gave 200 of it to be used for what she considered to be godly purposes. What about the other 900? She kept it for herself (so in essence she's ripping off God even though what she was doing was completely wrong anyway) so it's hard to condemn your son as a thief when you're setting that example.

Vs5

Now this is way out of line, not only is he falling into full-fledged idolatry here, but God's word is very clear regarding the priesthood and the fact that only the sons of Aaron were to be the priests. Now the men of the tribe of Levi served regarding the ministry but the lineage of the priesthood was reserved for the sons of Aaron. But this is where some of the commentators believe that he was seeking to sort of emulate what was happening at the tabernacle, because of the ephod that the priests would wear and all of these little things that sort of reflected what happened at the tabernacle. But again had he knew what the scriptures taught he'd have known that there was to be no other place of worship other than that which God had ordained for the nation.

So Micah has coveted his mom's silver, stolen, and in that act dishonored his mother, he bore false witness regarding the fact that he stole the money until she placed a curse on it, made graven images, and according to Prov ch 30 Vs 8-9 stealing is to profane the name of God. And so you can see how honest intentions if not harnessed by the direction of God's word can lead you astray. You see, notice vs 6

Vs6

Not what was wrong in his own eyes, but what was right, but the problem was that it was right in *their own eyes*, their own opinion, their own intentions and interests. Not what was right in God's eyes, the bible says that there is a way that seems right to man, but it's end is the way of death. Man left to his own opinion and own interest will destroy himself, the bible says that the way of the fool is right in his own eyes but he who heeds counsel is wise. And again all the ways of man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits. It's this very statement that makes the book of Judges so relevant to the very day in which we live, because when you take out absolutes and just leave every individual to determine what's right in their own eyes, you're simply left overwhelmed in the swamp of relativism. If it feels good do it, if it's right for you, then that's what you need to do. You see at that point what the word of God says is irrelevant and so I'm left to determine in my flesh what's right for me.

So if homosexuality is your thing, then hey that's what's right for you, if new age mysticism is what you feel is right for you then do what you need to do in order that you might feel good about your life, you see Israel during this period was a society filled with violence, idolatry, immorality and was utterly pagan in several aspects of their culture- and yet all the while the people doing what they believed to be right. All their moral standards, values, doctrines and practices went out the window with the absolute of the word of God. Now if that doesn't describe our day nothing does, everyone doing what seems best to them, everything being relative to my own personal conscious convictions and I won't rock your boat if you don't rock mine. And when spiritual anarchy prevails, moral collapse is inevitable.

Vs7-13

Now at least Micah had an excuse regarding his ignorance of God's word, even though it doesn't justify our practice. People often times make decisions based upon their emotions contrary to biblical instruction and try to justify it because of the fact that they were ignorant of the scriptures, but sin is sin whether you're aware of it or not. But in the case of this Levite *he* knew the word, and even though it's a natural ambition to want to better yourself, for this Levite it's contrary to God's will for him. God had pre-appointed allotments of land that the Levite's were to inhabit, but for whatever reason this fellow wasn't satisfied with where God would have him be. One commentator makes this statement regarding this Levite (Gary Inrig), "Here was a man who refused to be satisfied with God's arrangements for his life. God had given him an area of service, and, had he lived faithfully with in the sphere of his divine calling, the Lord would have extended his area of ministry. But he was committed to self-promotion and to personal betterment.

One of Satan's most subtle devices is to get a Christian dissatisfied with the life circumstances and the area of service God has given him. "I should be better known." "I should be in public more." "I should be paid more." "I should receive more praise." It is very subtle, but far too often Christians will not do a job because they think it is beneath them; or they will leave a church because no one pays enough attention to them; or they will pout because someone else is more important than they are."

For whatever reason this Levite isn't where God has ordained him to be and ultimately he shows himself to be an opportunist and a hireling, again ordinary Levites were not to be priests, in Num ch 16 when Korah sought to act as a priest God caused the earth open up and take him alive right down to the pit. And here we see where he is willing to serve in this house of idolatry for the right price, room and board, a new change of clothes and 10 shekels of silver a year, and for all that's gone wrong the sad part is, is that now Micah thinks that God is really going to bless him. After all, he's got this place of worship, he's mimicked a few of the ordinances and objects of the tabernacle, has a real Levite working for him and the whole bit. And it's easy to see his perspective, but as innocent as his intentions may've been they weren't biblical and God wouldn't honor it. Don't be deceived, your view of God, and worship of God isn't scriptural, then it doesn't matter how innocent your intentions are, God does not receive your worship and His blessing will not be upon your life and sincerity counts for nothing. God has revealed Himself to us in His word; He has revealed how He's to be worshipped to us in His word. And everything that we need to know regarding life and godliness is in His word and when we deviate from that, (regardless of our intentions) we're in sin.

Ch18

Vs1

Now the reason this keeps saying there was no king in Israel is because if there were a king people wouldn't be able to do whatever they felt the need to do, but the reality was there was a King, God Himself was to be their King they just refused to acknowledge Him as their King.

And don't miss understand this vs, they had an allotted portion of land just like the rest of the nation, but they were unable to drive out the enemy from their full portion. So rather than trusting God and going to battle against the enemy in their own land, they were seeking to get some land somewhere else where there was easier prey. But by looking for the easy way out, ultimately it's going to do them much harm as they fall prey to idolatry, they should have stayed where God called them and trusted the Lord to move in their lives giving them the victory they needed.

Vs2-4

So they recognized his southern accent and said why are you here, and he was honest, he said hey the guy pays me good, so I'm sticking around. Jesus warned us about hirelings, ministers interested only in what's in it for them and they wind up hurting the sheep rather than helping the sheep, well, we'll see that this fellow never really helped anybody.

Vs5-6

Now believe me when I tell you that God wasn't blessing the actions of these guys even though they are going to win their battle, again just because things at times seem to go our way doesn't necessarily indicate that it's because God is blessing our endeavors. This priest was out of God's will, working for a man out of God's will, talking to a people that were out of God's will, and giving them a false assurance that God was blessing their disobedience to Him in not trusting Him for the land they were given. He should have said, go back where you came from and trust the Lord to give you victory where he's placed you instead of looking for some other place to prosper.

Vs7-13

He must've had an on the way kind of place.

Vs14

In other words you know what to do, lets rip them off.

Vs15-20

This is almost funny if it weren't so sad, he just got a promotion, he sees these people ripping off his employer and says hey, what's the deal. And they said, if you knew what was good for you, you'd keep quiet, why don't you come with us and minister to our tribe rather than one man, there's more pay, better benefits and the whole bit. And notice the priests heart was glad, and so he ripped off the ephod and other idols and down the road they went. Again a hirelings heart, not content where he's at, he sees greater opportunity and takes it, you see who are you serving? Yourself? Your church, or is it the Lord? The lesson of this mans life is contentment, godliness with contentment is great gain, but the bible says that we're to withdraw from those who use godliness as a means of gain.

Vs21-26

He wanted riches, religion, and respectability, and he lost all 3, the silver, his religion was stolen, and he lost respect when he had to turn away rather than protect what was his. But what a tragedy we see in vs 24, he felt as though he had to protect his gods; if your god needs your protection you might consider getting a new one. And we see the emptiness of idolatry and putting other things in the place of the true and living God, when that which he worshipped was taken from him he said, what else do I have? That's the folly of serving gods you can carry instead of the God who carries you, once it's gone you're left empty and lost.

Vs27-30

If you look in your margin you see the reality of who this Levite Jonathan was, he was the grandson of Moses, that's how this event is dated so near to Joshua's death. But some of the scribes had altered the name of Moses to Manasseh to seek to cover the fact that such a godly man as Moses could have such a degenerate descendant as Jonathan, but what's the lesson? Godliness isn't genetic; it doesn't do you any good to have a godly ancestor if you don't know God yourself, you don't get into heaven on mom and dad or grandma and grandpa's coattails.

Vs31-

Now if you look at the map in the back of your bible you realize that Shiloh was just over the hill from where Micah was in Ephraim, so his idolatry wasn't because the tabernacle was in some unattainable land far off, it was simple defiance of the word of God. It doesn't matter how sincere you are concerning your approach to godliness, if your approach defies the word of God, then you are just as guilty of heresy and idolatry as was Micah. And as for the tribe of Dan the ultimate outcome of their desire for easy living was their downfall. When the tribes are listed in 1st Chronicles, Dan is the tribe that is totally ignored, and if you want to push the envelope a little bit, when you come to the book of Revelation and discover the 144,000 Hebrews that God ordains to spread the gospel during the Tribulation after the rapture. Dan isn't listed in the # that's ordained, they refused to follow through with God's mission for them in Israel, therefore it would seem God refuses to give them part in the mission he has for the tribes of Israel in the future. It's so important to be faithful with that, which God entrusts us with. Jesus said that if we're faithful we'll be given more, but if not, even what we have will be taken from us.