

JUDGES 17-18

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Judges chapter 17 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

As we move into Judges chapters 17-21, they are not necessarily in chronological order, but they are more of an appendix just filling in some information that occurred during this period of the Judges.

What we will see in these chapters is that the Lord is giving us a picture of the hearts of the people, and He does that by showing what is being manifested in their lives.

It truly all boils down to this, **“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”** Judges 21:25.

Years ago, Outback Steakhouse had a commercial where there was this truckload of good-looking guys and gals, and they drove to the beach. As they got there, they saw this sign, a warning sign not to go any further.

But they go against the law, and they are having a great time on the beach. And, of course, they are eating bloom’n onions, steaks, and having some beer.

And as they are doing this, the spokesman chants this motto, ***“No Rules, Just Right!”***

Now that is interesting because if you go to this restaurant and you ask them to substitute cheese fries for regular fries, they won’t do it!

Why won’t they do this?

Because it is against the rules!

I find that interesting because their motto was, ***“No Rules, Just Right!”***

In other words, that motto only applies when it works in their favor.

That should sound familiar because that is our nation and really the world today.

When a society, when a nation turns from God, they become an amoral society, and they make up their own rules. Anything goes, ***EXCEPT FOR THE THINGS OF GOD!***

And when that happens, things get ugly in a society, in a nation and we see that being played out today!

As we dig into these chapters, we will see that in Judges chapters 17 and 18 the focus is on the spiritual condition of the people, and it is not pretty.

And it truly begins with the leadership of the people and as the leadership moves away from God, as they dive into idolatry, it is not long before the rest of the people join in and follow them.

That is what we see here, and I am sorry to say this is what we are seeing in the days we are living in. We have leaders teaching that there is no blood atonement, that there is universal salvation, that even the devil gets saved!

I realize that is hard to believe that so-called Christians are teaching that but one of the most popular authors several years ago was the author of *The Shack*!

Do you know what he believes!

There is no blood atonement, that there is universal salvation, or everyone gets saved, even the Devil!

And we saw many Christians' jumping on that band wagon and praising this book. Now they may not believe in what he believes but when they are reading his material and saying it is the greatest book they have ever read, that it has helped them draw closer to God, then it won't be long until they follow this man's false doctrine!

And let me say this. What about the Bible? I thought that was the greatest book ever written and it will help us draw closer to God!

The only way you will be able to stand against the false doctrine coming into the church is God's Word!

Let me show you what I mean as God gives us some insight into the leadership in Ezekiel's day, the spiritual condition they were in as we are told in Ezekiel 8:6-12,

“Furthermore He said to me, ‘Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, to make Me go far away from My sanctuary? Now turn again, you will see greater abominations. ‘So He brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, there was a hole in the wall. Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, dig into the wall’; and when I dug into the wall, there was a door. And He said to me, ‘Go in, and see the wicked abominations which they are doing there.’ So I went in and saw, and there - every sort of creeping thing, abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed all around on the walls. And there stood before them seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, and in their midst stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan. Each man had a censer in his hand, and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the room of his idols? For they say, “‘The Lord does not see us, the Lord has forsaken the land.’””

And as I have said, as the religious leaders go so too will the people, they will follow right along and once there is spiritual apostasy then moral degradation, immorality will flow and that is what Ezekiel also shows us in Ezekiel 9:9, **“Then He said to me, ‘The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great, and the land is full of bloodshed, and the city full of perversity; for they say, ‘The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see!’”**”

And we will see the moral decay as we get into chapters 19-21 in Judges.

And think about how quickly they turned from the Lord after seeing all that the Lord had done for them. How He delivered them and brought them into the land of Canaan and because they did not drive out the enemy, because they thought they knew what was best, they turned from the Lord and are in apostasy!

What a warning to us to stay close to the Lord and obey His Words to us for it is what is best. And if you doubt that, by the time we finish up these 5 chapters over the next few weeks, you will see that apart from God there is only death and destruction, not only spiritual, but physical!

We see this spoken of in Psalm 106:34-39, where we are told, **“They did not destroy the peoples, Concerning whom the Lord had commanded them, But they mingled with the Gentiles And learned their works; They served their idols, Which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons And their daughters to demons, And shed innocent blood, The blood of their sons and daughters, Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; And the land was polluted with blood. Thus they were defiled by their own works, And played the harlot by their own deeds.”**

They disobeyed the Lord, and the results were devastating to them!

One more point before we move on and that is the time frame of these chapters and from the context, it seems that this happened very early on in the book of Judges, possibly during the time of Othniel, who was the first Judge.

The reason I say that is that in Judges 18:30 we see Jonathan mentioned and it says “**the son of Manasseh**” but that was probably done purposefully by a scribe to protect the reputation of Moses because he was the grandson of Moses, and he was very evil!

Also, the last 3 chapters also were probably occurring very early on because in Judges 20:28 we read of Eleazar, the grandson of Aaron mentioned.

With that said, let’s begin reading in Judges chapter 17, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study His Word, and we look at the religious apostasy that was occurring in the land of Israel!

JUDGES 17

VERSES 1-2

Here we are introduced to this messed-up family. But before I deal with that, let me say this about this man named Micah.

First of all, the name Micah means, “*who is like YAHWEH.*”

Now you read that, and you may be thinking, “*What a great name that is! His parents must love the Lord and passed this on to Micah!*”

The reality is, that is all it was, a name. It did nothing for Micah.

Now you may be wondering how I can say something like that about this man.

It is really very simple. Look at what he did. He stole 1,100 shekels of silver from his mother and then he gets a little nervous because she put a curse on the person that stole this silver. Not only was he wrong, but his mom, putting a curse is not of God!

And keep in mind that this was a lot of money because in Judges 17:10 we are told that ten shekels a year was a decent wage!

So 1,100 shekels was a good amount of money!

Feeling guilty, especially with this curse his mother put on the person that stole it, he confesses that he stole her silver and instead of rebuking him she tells him, “**May you be blessed by the LORD, my son!**”

And notice that “**LORD**” is in capitals and thus she is speaking of Yahweh!

What a messed-up family. She calls for the Lord to bless her son the thief!

This again just shows where they were as a people, and it was not good!

VERSES 3-4

Now this is interesting to me. He gives his mom back the silver shekels he stole, and she then dedicates this back to the Lord.

Sounds good but she will use this money to make carved images and molded images with!

Not only that, but out of the 1,100 silver shekels she got back, she only used 200 of them for the Lord.

But what did she say about this money?

She 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.’**”

Judges 17:3.

Well, not exactly. Out of the 1,100 silver shekels, she gave only 200 to the Lord! Not even half!

There is something else I want you to see here. I want you to see how easy it was for her to get these molded and carved images made in Israel!

She did not have to dig through the phone book to find an idol maker because they were well known!

What a sad state of affairs!

And these carved images that were for God, well, not exactly. God forbid the making of these images, just look at the second commandment!

And it didn't matter if this was an idol to a false god or to the true and living God, because God forbid the making of idols to worship Him by!

You see, you can't worship God any way you want. Like I have said, God forbid carved images.

You must worship God in Spirit and in truth or you must be saved, and you must worship God according to His Word or He won't accept it.

Look at the golden calf the children of Israel made at Mount Sinai and the Lord rejected that and He still rejects objects that we make to worship Him by. He wants our worship, not some idol!

When people lose the consciousness of God they resort to idols, stained glass windows, incense, whatever can draw them back to God instead of what can really help them, God Himself!

VERSE 5

There is so much that is wrong here! Let us take a look at how far from God this man, Micah really was.

As you look at this man, I think we would call Micah a religious man because of what he was doing but the Lord does not approve of it even today!

God is not interested in religion but a relationship and here Micah takes these idols, these images and makes a worship center with them and then he takes his son and makes him the priest of this worship center.

He even set up household idols or teraphim that were nothing more than gods that were worshiped to bring about prosperity and guidance!

Not only did he break the Law that God established in Exodus 20:4 by making these images but his son is not from the tribe of Levi, nor is he a descendant of Aaron and he had no right to be a priest!

As one writer put it, ***“All of this came from Micah and not from God. This was a completely man-originated and man-centered religion. Therefore, the purpose of the shrine, the beautiful ephod, the attractive idols, and the established priesthood was to serve and please man, not God. This pattern of man-pleasing religion continues to be common with many religions and churches today.”*** (David Guzik, Judges 17)

Now as you are reading this you may be wondering how this could happen in Israel when they were given so much from God?

The answer is found in the next verse!

VERSE 6

Here is the reason for their failure, they had no king, no one to lead them and they did not want God to do it, thus, they did what they felt was right in their own heart!

Guess what?

The heart is evil, and it is wrong.

Look at where we are today as a nation. We can murder the unborn in the womb and say that it is a woman's choice! We have come a long way baby!

We call it existentialism, but it is the same basic idea, if it feels right do it! There is no right and no wrong.

When you take God out of the picture, Jesus, it is amazing how far people can go. And here specifically we are speaking of the church.

Look at what the Emergent Church is doing, they are worshiping God the way they want, through experience and they have taken God's Word away because you really can't know what it means, words have so many meanings.

Which is interesting because they do write many books and produce many DVDs to teach their doctrines of demons to the people!

And the end result is people in the church do what they feel is right in their own eyes and that is not good!

It brings anarchy inside the church, and it brings anarchy in this world!

It is as Proverbs 14:12 tells us, “**There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.**” May we not forget that!

This sums it up for us. In their book “*American Demographics*” authors Cimino and Lattin explain what kind of religion people desire today. Listen carefully!

“It’s a religion of the heart, not of the head. It’s practical and personal, more about stress reduction than salvation, more therapeutic than theological. It’s about feeling good, not being good. It’s as much about the body as it is about the soul.”

In other words, people today want a convenient spirituality without *moral absolutes* and **ultimate authority**.

They want *a designer religion not biblical truth*.

They’re happy to embrace Jesus as a potential *guide, or helper, or friend!*

But not a Jesus who is Lord of their life, it does not fit into their spirituality!

VERSES 7-8

We are told that this man’s name was Jonathan (Judges 18:30), who was a grandson of Moses, which meant he came from the tribe of Levi, but he was not a priest, only the descendants of Aaron where the priests.

What is the point?

That point is very simple. It meant that he couldn’t serve as a priest. But as a Levite he should have been living in one of the 48 Levitical cities set up for them to minister throughout the land, but he was in Bethlehem instead.

And he was having a hard time finding work, maybe the people were not providing for them like they should of, and thus, he goes looking for work!

You can read of what Moses told them should happen in regard to supporting the Levites in Numbers 18:21-32, Deuteronomy 14:27-29 and 26:12-15.

Here is something that I believe is important for us to understand. God gives us a lot in life, a place to live you might say. And it is when we are disappointed in what we have, when we are not satisfied with what we have, that we go out looking for other places to live, to try to get another lot in life, you might say.

And that can be where you physically live, or the person you are living with you are not satisfied with, or the job you have, and the list can go on-and-on. But you get the idea.

We need to be satisfied where God has planted us and when we are where God wants us to be, that is where we will grow!

As we will see, this story gets stranger and stranger!

VERSES 9-10

Why did Micah do this?

Because Micah wants to gain legitimacy for his religion by hiring a live-in priest.

And thus, we see that Micah made Jonathan a deal he could not refuse.

He would get paid, a place to stay, he would be a priest, some cool clothes to wear and Jonathan grabbed at the offer, but the reality is, he was a hireling, selling himself out for money.

Yes, there was comfort; there was security in the house of an idolater!

But don't sell yourself out to the enemy doing things you should not be doing because it will be easier for you or provide what you will need.

Do what God has called you to do!

Again, for Micah, to have his own personal priest would legitimize his shrine that he made. People would come and visit his shrine!

Here's the thing. Man cannot legitimize anything we do, only God can and if we are serving Him, walking as He called us to walk, that is all we need to encourage us to continue on.

We do not need man to legitimize the work!

VERSES 11-13

How warped the mind of Micah was.

He thinks that now that he has this priest to attend to the shrine he has made, that God will bless his household.

The reality was that this man was not a priest; he was only from the tribe of Levi.

How could they move so far away from the truths of God?

Very simply, they had nothing to guide them, and as you start getting off course, it is not long before you are totally lost, not knowing where you are.

Let me explain it like this.

Imagine if you were going to sail from California to Hawaii, and when you started you were only a few degrees off course.

Not much at all.

But by the time you were to arrive in Hawaii, you would be so far off course that you would miss the island completely.

So how can we stay on track?

Simple, you need a compass.

For us our compass is the Word of God that keeps us on track. You will never go astray if you are guided by the instrument that God has given to you to keep you on track! And the instrument that God has given to us is the Word of God which is powered by the Holy Spirit.

This Levite should have known the Word of God, and he probably did, he just did not agree with it, and he did it his own way!

Remember these songs and sayings, because they do reflect what was going on in Israel and what is going on in our nation today.

Frank Sinatra sang, ***“I did it my way!”***

And the Burger King saying, ***“Have it your way!”***

Or those songs from the 60’s, ***“I’ve gotta be me!”*** or ***“Born free!”***

That just does not work because when we do what is right in our own eyes, it is not good, and God will not accept it. Learn the lesson!

Let me ask you this. Was Micah sincere?

Yes, he was!

Was Jonathan sincere?

Yes, he was!

The problem was that they both were sincerely wrong. That is the problem. People think that spiritually speaking, as long as you are sincere that is good! Not exactly.

Let me show you what I mean.

Say that I am very sincere about jumping over the Grand Canyon; I have no doubt that I can do it.

Does that mean I will do it?

Absolutely not because it is not sincerity that counts. I can be sincere and the person who is not sincere, does not believe he can do it, we both will have the same outcomes.

What matters is the truth and the same with our faith, may we not forget that!

It is amazing to me, but the Jonathan's and Micah's will always find each other, because they need each other.

Remember what Paul told Timothy, warning him of what was to come, **“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers, and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”** II Timothy 4:3-4.

You see, there will always be those seeking to satisfy self, no matter if it contradicts what God has said, and there will always be those who will teach that garbage of lies to others. You see, they need each other.

Our responsibility, Paul says, is to, **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”** II Timothy 4:2.

You see, there will always be false doctrine out there; our responsibility is not to embrace it but expose it as error with the *Word of GOD!*

And yes, there are seasons when people don't want to hear God's Word, but don't let that stop you. You need to be ready for whatever season comes your way and give the truth in love to a world in darkness!

JUDGES 18**VERSE 1**

I thought the tribe of Dan was given an inheritance of land back in Joshua chapter 19, so what is going on here?

Yes, they were given an inheritance, but they did not drive out the enemy, the Amorites and later the Philistines, and they wanted more land, they were not satisfied with what God had given to them.

This area that was allotted to them was by the Jerusalem mountains to the Mediterranean Sea Coast.

And, as I have said, this was also the area in which the Philistines dwelt.

And the tribe of Dan could not drive them out, but were only able to take a small portion of land to live in.

Thus, most of the tribe of Dan headed northward, to Laish. This is a beautiful, fertile area at the base of Mount Hermon.

But, like I said, it is always tragic to see God's people dwelling in the place that God has not given to them.

And did you notice once again that there was no King in Israel and thus, we see the tribe of Dan do what is right in their own eyes, it was not the will of God! There is no mention of them seeking direction from God, praying, waiting upon God!

How true that is for our own lives. It is hard to wait upon God. It is hard to take the time and seek His direction for our lives. But if we don't, what happens will not be good, it is not what God has for us. We must learn to wait upon the Lord!

VERSES 2-6

Because the tribe of Dan was not satisfied with the lot they received from the Lord, they send out these five men, from the tribe of Dan, and they head northward to find an area of land for the rest of the tribe of Dan to dwell in.

We are told that they rested at Micah's house and while there they recognized Jonathan's dialect and wondered what in the world he was doing in Micah's house.

Jonathan is not ashamed and tells them that Micah hired him. Since Jonathan was a priest, or so he was hired as one, these guys ask him to inquire of the Lord to see if their journey will be prosperous.

And Jonathan tells them not to worry and then he tells them the reason they were not to worry; it is because God is with them!

Now I truly doubt if that is what God said to him, I think more likely Jonathan was a man pleaser and just told them what they wanted to hear.

Why do I say that?

Because these men from Dan were not on a mission from God, they are on their own mission and Jonathan was not a priest of God, he was appointed by man!

Thus, I do not believe he was hearing from God but like many today, they use the tag, "**God said . . .**" and they think that legitimizes what they are saying!

That is totally wrong, and I don't care how sincere you are about it.

And for the Danites, this area of land they will occupy will become a place of idolatry down the road. So it was not a good thing for them to be out of the will of God doing their own thing even if they felt God was in it, because He wasn't!

And the reality is, they go into idolatry right away and it is only going to get worse until the Assyrians finally take them into captivity with the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 721 B. C.

We see this played out for us in I Kings 12:25-30 as we are told, **“Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and dwelt there. Also he went out from there and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah.’ Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!’ And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan.”**

You see how idolatry was brought into this area of Dan where the Danites were going to move to!

Be careful in who you are following, where you are going, be in the will of God for it is the safest place to be!

You may wonder how this man of God, this representative of God could do these things?

The reality is, he was not a man of God but a man who was satisfying his own heart’s desire.

Remember when wicked King Ahab asked King Jehoshaphat to assist him in battle against the Syrians at Ramoth Gilead. And Jehoshaphat, who was a Godly King, asks King Ahab to inquire of the Lord to see if they should go to war. And King Ahab gathers together 400 prophets and asks them that question. They responded by saying **“Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king.”** I Kings 22:6.

And you would think that 400 prophets all-agreeing would be enough, but Jehoshaphat said, **“Is there not still a prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of him?”** I Kings 22:8.

And reluctantly King Ahab informs King Jehoshaphat that there does remain one more prophet, Micaiah. But the King hates this guy.

Why would the King hate this prophet of God?

We are told by King Ahab, **“Because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.”** I Kings 22:8.

Remember that King Ahab is a wicked King, and he is married to that wicked woman named Jezebel.

But they reluctantly bring this man, Micaiah in before these two Kings. And as they bring Micaiah in, they tell him to speak as the other prophets have spoken.

In other words, they wanted him to be a man pleaser, to speak as they spoke! They wanted him to encourage the King, and they were not concerned with the truth.

So the King asks Micaiah what they should do, and, almost sarcastically he says **“Go and prosper, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king!”** I Kings 22:15.

The King recognized what Micaiah was doing and said to him “**How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?**” I Kings 22:16.

Please understand that he did not want to hear the truth because he couldn't handle the truth and yet, he knew that this prophet was lying and wanted him to speak forth. That is very interesting and because of what the King said, Micaiah lets him have it. He tells him that Israel will be defeated in this battle, and King Ahab would not return from the battle, he would die!

His reward for speaking the truths of God was he got punched in the face, locked in prison and fed bread and water.

The King did not want to hear the truth but wanted his ears tickled by the words of his false prophets.

What Micaiah said came to pass, but we still see that kind of garbage spoken today, the tickling of people's ears instead of the truth of God found in the Word of God!

People do not want to hear the truths of God. They want to be told that all roads lead to God and not just the narrow road.

And here's the thing. When you speak the truths of God, many don't want to hear it. They don't want to hear of a righteous God who is coming to judge those who have rejected His Son Jesus Christ.

So they speak of a God of love, negating that He is also a righteous Judge and will judge the wickedness in this world.

Not only will they speak forth lies, but they will come against those who are speaking the truth. It is a warning to us, don't compromise the message because of the response!

And the reality is, that as much as people don't want to hear it, Christ is coming in judgment against a Christ rejecting world. No matter how much they try to deny that fact, it will come to pass, for God has said it.

We need to fulfill the work of the ministry that God has given to us and share the Word of God in season and out of season, if they want to hear it or if they do not want to hear it!

The men of Dan had their ears tickled by Jonathan, but again, I don't think it was of the Lord. Jonathan gave them the answer they wanted to hear.

And what we see here is, spiritually speaking, how confused they were! Think about it. These Danites were on a sinful mission and met up with a sinful Levite and wanted to know from a righteous God if their mission would be successful. And this sinful Levite sends these sinning men on their way and tells them God will bless their efforts!

VERSE 7

Laish was a city about 25 miles north of the Sea of Chinnereth or Kinnereth; we know it as the Sea of Galilee.

And this area is very lush, had a large amount of vegetation, a good water supply and the men of Dan felt that this would be a great place to raise a family or really relocate their tribe to.

As for the people of Laish, they were a peaceful people, and because of their location, they were isolated from other nations who might be able to help them in case of a war.

The men of Laish were not strong militarily and because of all of this, the tribe of Dan felt it would be easy to defeat them and the land was ripe for them to live in.

VERSES 8-13

We see that these five spies return home and tell their brethren what they found. Laish was a fertile land that should be easy to take from the people.

Because of that they gather 600 men to go and fight to attain this land.

And they come to Micah's house. Now it would seem that Micah's house was the place to stop by as you are passing through the area!

Maybe it was known for its shrine or just a place to rest before you continued on in your journey!

Why was it easier for them to fight against the people of this distant land than in the land that God had given them?

Maybe the reason is that the grass is always greener on the other side, but the reality is, they use more fertilizer! And yes, the Philistines were a stronger enemy and maybe they just wanted the easy way!

Here's the thing. May we be content with what God has given to us and fight for what God has given us. May we not go outside of God's desire for us!

VERSES 14-17

As these five men, along with the 600 who were standing at the gate, come to Micah's house, they go in and take the carved image, the ephod, the household idols and the molded image!

Why did they do this?

I guess they wanted to worship God by these things and to do that they needed to take them!

They didn't even think twice about this, they just went in and took them!

As strange as that sounds, people do all kinds of evil in the name of God.

Way back in the 1990's, during the Los Angeles riots, there were many looters. And a reporter happened to come upon three men who were looting a store and he asked them what they had taken.

The first two men refused to answer, and they just spewed out some profanity and continued on.

Interestingly enough the third man said, ***"I got some gospel music. I love Jesus!"***

That is amazing to me because what he was doing contradicted what he said about his love for Jesus!

May our words and actions match our love for the Lord!

VERSES 18-21

Here is a picture of a hireling or a person who is only doing the work for money and position and not for the Lord. These men threaten Jonathan and then they offer him a better position with them, and he takes it!

Jonathan is not a true shepherd of God but is only interested in his own well-being!

Jesus put it like this in John 10:12-13, **"But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep."**

Many do the same today; they are not interested in the flock that God has entrusted to them but always looking for bigger and better things for themselves! ***“Hey, come and be our pastor. We have lots of people, a big building, and you will get paid very well!”*** And that temptation is grabbed many times.

That is sad and that is not a true shepherd of God! I truly believe that a pastor is a shepherd and God has entrusted to him a group of people, and it is his responsibility to watch over them, teach them, love them, correct them no matter what or how difficult it may be or how great an offer you get to leave and oversee another church!

Why do the men of Dan place the little ones, the livestock and the goods in front of them?

Because these men of Dan recognized that Micah might not appreciate what they did, so they place the young, the livestock and their goods in the front, so that if Micah attacks from the rear, they would be ready for him.

Their behavior illustrates their serpent behavior mentioned in Jacob’s prophecy for this tribe back in Genesis 49:17, where we are told, **“Dan shall be a serpent by the way, A viper by the path, That bites the horse’s heels So that its rider shall fall backward.”**

This tribe was treacherous and as we are seeing, they are introducing idolatry into the tribe and by the time we get to Kings, it is out of control!

VERSES 22-24

This is kind of ironic when you think about it.

Micah has to go on a rescue mission to get back his god’s that were stolen.

How tragic when a man's god's can be carried away. You see, idolaters worship god's that can be carried away, but we as Christians worship a God who carries us!

Who do you want to worship, a god that can be stolen, a god that has fallen and can't get up, a god who can't do anything, or the true and living God who is actively involved in our lives?

The choice is simple; I am going to worship the true and living God!

Remember what Moses told the children of Israel regarding what God has done for them and keep in mind that He is also doing the same for us.

He said in Deuteronomy chapter 1, "**The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.**" Deuteronomy 1:30-31.

That is our God, He is actively involved in our lives!

And look at what Micah said in verse 24, "**Now what more do I have?**"

His god was stolen, but how many have their god's taken away by other things? And in the end, what are they left with? Nothing. That is Micah's complaint, that he has nothing left. How sad!

F. B. Meyer wrote, "*Whatever can be taken from us has the mark and signature of man upon it.*"

But for us as Christians, you can take everything else away from us, you can take away from us everything that is material, our health, our relationships and yet, we still have the **LORD!**

You see, He will always be with us, He will never leave us and that should bring great comfort to us!

But this statement of Micah reflects the emptiness of idolatry!

VERSES 25-26

These men stole these idols to worship God by and yet, look at how they acted, like animals. And thus, this just shows that they were not loving the true and living God, worshipping Him but the god's that they have created in their own minds and that lead to immorality besides apostasy!

You see, when you throw out God's laws do you know what happens? It is then up to the people who are in power to make the rules. I guess you can say that it becomes the law of the jungle – ***MIGHT MAKES RIGHT!***”

And here's the thing. Apostasy leads to immorality! Their words were harsh towards Micah, and they basically told him to watch his mouth, or he would lose more than just his gods, he would lose his life!

Again, they were living out the idea that - ***WHAT IS YOURS IS MINE AND THUS, I WILL TAKE IT!***

That seems to be what we see happening today. This philosophy has emerged today because people have moved away from the true and living God!

VERSES 27-29

Look at what they have done. They took this priest and his idols with them to Laish and destroyed the people of Laish, and they rebuilt the city and now call it Dan after their father or the son of Jacob, one of the 12 sons of Israel.

And now this will become the northern border of Israel and the expression, “**from Dan to Beersheba**” is used to speak of the area of land from the north to the south in Israel or all Israel. (Judges 20:1, I Samuel 3:20, II Samuel 3:10, 17:11, 24:2, 24:15).

When you look at what they have done, stolen these idols, it is nothing more than the false worship of God.

And what did that lead to?

It brought them into an immoral, wicked, lifestyle!

That is what false religion, false worship will do!

VERSES 30-31

The place of worship for Israel was to be in Shiloh as we are told in Joshua 18:1. That is where the Tabernacle was set up.

But we see the tribe of Dan set up their own idolatrous place of worship here in Laish and we have moved from individual idolatry with Micah to a whole tribe adopting idolatry and this will peak as we get to I Kings chapter 12 as a golden calf is set up in Dan to worship God by!

As sincere as they were, what they were doing was in direct opposition to God and that is important for us to understand today as people want to worship God any way they want, according to how they feel.

As I have said, God **MUST** be worshiped in **SPIRIT** and in **TRUTH!** That is the only worship that God will accept. I don't care how sincere you may be!

Now it says that Jonathan was the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, but I don't believe that is correct.

Many feel that a scribe changed the name Moses to Manasseh to protect the reputation of Moses. They did not want this man of God to have a grandson that was into idolatry like this.

And there are some translations that use Moses instead of Manasseh and it does fit the picture of the son of Gershom!

It also speaks of this idolatry continuing on in Dan until the time of their captivity.

What captivity is this speaking of?

We don't know for sure, but this idolatry continued on until they were taken captive, the Northern Kingdom of Israel including Dan, in 721 B. C. by the Assyrians! God was gracious, He was merciful, but they refused to repent and get right, and judgment came upon them because of it!

We have seen the spiritual or religious apostasy that was occurring in the land and this religious apostasy will lead to social or moral degradation because everyone will be doing what is right in their own eyes, they had no King to lead them!

There is no excuse for us, we have a King, we have Jesus who rules and reigns in our hearts if we would only obey because as we draw close to Him what will flow from our lives will be good.

But, as we move away from Him, as people turn from God, as they move into religious apostasy, then their actions will be evil, we will see morality spiraling downward, out of control and that is what we see in this country.

The only hope for this nation is Jesus and may we be the people who shine the light of Christ to a nation that is in darkness!

Next time, as we conclude the book of Judges, we will see the moral decay in the nation and it is very ugly but again, they turned from God and did what was right in their own eyes and that is never good. It truly shows what was in their hearts will be manifested in their lives!

May we learn the lesson!

