



Sermon Notes

Journey Through Judges #18
Spiritual Decay
Judges 17-18

November 18, 2007

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Judges 17:1-13 ¹There was a man of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. ²And he said to his mother, "The 1,100 pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse, and also spoke it in my ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it." And his mother said, "Blessed be my son by the LORD." ³And he restored the 1,100 pieces of silver to his mother. And his mother said, "I dedicate the silver to the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a carved image and a metal image. Now therefore I will restore it to you." ⁴So when he restored the money to his mother, his mother took 200 pieces of silver and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into a carved image and a metal image. And it was in the house of Micah. ⁵And the man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and household gods, and ordained ⁶one of his sons, who became his priest. ⁶In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

⁷Now there was a young man of Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. ⁸And the man departed from the town of Bethlehem in Judah to sojourn where he could find a place. And as he journeyed, he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah. ⁹And Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?" And he said to him, "I am a Levite of Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to sojourn where I may find a place." ¹⁰And Micah said to him, "Stay with me, and be to me a father and a priest, and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year and a suit of clothes and your living." And the Levite went in. ¹¹And the Levite was content to dwell with the man, and the young man became to him like one of his sons. ¹²And Micah ordained the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. ¹³Then Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will prosper me, because I have a Levite as priest."

Introduction

Journey Through Judges Series: Rounding the Final Turn

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Spiritual Decay
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1. Micah & the Levite: Everyone Right in his Own Eyes (17:1-13)

a. Ephraimite Idol (1-5)

- Micah returns 1100 pieces of stolen silver to his mother
- She dedicates the silver to the Lord to make an idol
 - 2nd Commandment: Exodus 20:3-6
 - Lev. 19:4, 26:1, Deut. 27:15, Is. 46:6-7
- Micah makes 'a carved image and a metal image'
 - 200 pieces? Where are the other 900 pieces?
- Micah has a Shrine - lit. "house of gods"
 - Deut. 12:11 – worship in "the place the Lord your God shall choose..."

b. Spiritual Anarchy (6)

- In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.
 - "no king" – human or heavenly, see Deut. 33:5, Judges 8:23, Isaiah 33:22, Revelation 19:16
 - "right in his own eyes" - 14:3b, 21:25, Prov. 14:12

c. Levite for hire (7-13)

- Micah hires this Levite to be his personal priest, treating his Levite heritage like a good luck charm
 - "Now I know that the LORD will prosper me, because I have a Levite as priest."

2. Danite Spies: A Mission from the Lord? (18:1-6)

a. The Tribe of Dan needs an inheritance... (1-2)

- Dan had failed to take the territory God had given them
 - Joshua 19:40-48, Judges 1:34
- They send out five spies to explore the land
- Compare: Israel's spies in the Promised Land - Num. 13:1-33

b. The five spies visit the Levite at Micah's house (3-6)

- When they find out that he is a priest they request that he inquire of God about the success of their journey
 - "Go in peace. The journey on which you go is under the eye of the Lord."

c. Syncretism

- The merging of true and idolatrous worship of the Lord
 - This is the spirit of our times

3. The Tribe of Dan: Ruthless Conquest and Idolatry (18:7-31)

- a. Looks good, Let's go! (7-12)
 - Laish has good land and is ready to be conquered
 - *'quiet and unsuspecting', 'lacking nothing', 'possessing wealth'* (7)
 - *'for God has given it into your hands'* (10)
 - 600 armed men set out
- b. A "Friendly" visit to Micah's house (13-20)
 - They visit him to steal his idols
 - They invite the Levite to join them, appealing to his pride and ambition (17-19)
 - *Is it better for you to be priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?" And the priest's heart was glad.*
 - He takes the better offer, abandoning Micah and joining in their theft of Micah's idols
 - **Q:** What motivates your decisions?
- c. Micah gives chase (21-26)
 - Dan: "Be quiet, go away, or we'll kill you and your family."
- d. Laish is conquered and idolatrous worship is established (27-31)
 - Dan kills the helpless people of Laish and burn their city
 - They rebuild and rename the city "Dan" (see Josh. 19:47)
 - They establish idolatrous worship with Micah's idol and the the Levite, who is now revealed to be *"Jonathan, son of Gershon, son of Moses"!!* (grandson or descendant)
 - Dan becomes a center of idol worship in Israel
 - 1 Kings 12:26-30
- e. Does evil win?
 - Dan is established and the Levite has a priestly dynasty
 - Job 21:7-18, Psalm 37:1,7, 73:3-12
 - Later, the tribe appears to be of little importance
 - 1 Chron. 4-7 genealogies – Dan is omitted
 - Revelation 7:4-8 144,000 – 12,000 from each tribe – Dan is again omitted
 - Psalm 92:6-9

Our Response

1. Don't confuse what is right in your own eyes with what is right in the eyes of the Lord.

Psalms 119:37

Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things;
and give me life in your ways.

2. Make your decisions based on spiritual principles, not personal pride or achievement.

Proverbs 3:6 (ESV)

In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.

Questions for Application

1. What is syncretism? Where do you see it in today's passage? Give an example of modern-day syncretism.
2. What are some common temptations to steal that people face?
3. Have you ever made a decision that in retrospect was based more on your own pride and ambition than on the ways of the Lord? How can we guard against this kind of decision-making?
4. How is 'doing what is right in your own eyes' related to idolatry? How is this the spirit of our times?
5. Pray together for strength from the Lord to make Him the greatest treasure in your life. Praise Him for being greater than any false god, and for the blessing of following His ways.

Questions, Comments? - inthebeginning@look.ca

If you have questions or comments about today's message, please drop me an email to the address above. Thanks,

Tim

