**You Really Need a King: Life Without the King: Religious Corruption**

(Judges 17-18)

11/13/16
Summary: When men replace God with idols, moral decay will naturally occur.They worship God on their own terms instead of on God’s terms. Their corrupted religious beliefs affect their family, their ministry, and their society. They do what appears to be right in their own eyes.

INTRODUCTION

Our country is in a mess. Our moral compass has gone bizarre. I have great fears as to what will happen to our children as they grow up in these surroundings. A study showed that young people who lack a basic biblical belief system are 36% more likely to lie to a friend, 48% more likely to cheat on an exam, 200% more likely to steal, 200% more likely to physically hurt someone. Even though kids attend church, many have distorted beliefs about God and the Bible.

As we have studied the Book of Judges during the past couple of months, we realized that Israel was in a mess. They had distorted beliefs about God. Joshua had done a fantastic job possessing the land that God had given to them. However, after the death of Joshua, there was a shift away from the Lord. Instead of depending on God, the people started depending more on themselves. As a result, they went into a sin cycle. Many times, God disciplinedHis people by raising up a neighboring country to place them in bondage. Ironically, for many of these cycles, it took a while before the Israelites were broken before they cried out to the Lord for deliverance. As they repented, God raise up a deliverer to rescue His people. Unfortunately, after a period of time, they returned back to the sin cycle.

As we come to the final couple of chapters from the Book of Judges, we see God’s people replacing God with idols. They worshiped God on their own terms instead of on God’s terms. Although God had provided them with the Law to give them instruction as to how to walk with God and how to walk harmoniously with one another, they still yielded to their sinful nature.

As we conclude this book, we will see how wicked the people had become. A good summary of the condition of their time is recorded in 17:6, “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.(ESV)” They hadthe idea that what you believe is right and what I believe is right. Such belief will end at chaos.

God has established three institutions in our society: the family, the worshipping community, where we called church, and human government. The Israelites’corrupted religious beliefs affected their family, their ministry, and their society. The family is the basic DNA of our society. When the family crumbles, the society will begin to fall apart. Let us start by looking at the corruption in the family. Let’s read Judg. 17:1-2, “Now a man named Micah from the hill country of Ephraim said to his mother, “The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from you and about which I heard you utter a curse- I have that silver with me; I took it.”

A.  Corruption in the Family

 The main character is introduced here. His name is Micah, which means “Who is like Jehovah?” Unfortunately, he did not live his life anywhere close to what his name is. He was far fromresembling Jehovah. Unfortunately, we see this family violating almost all of the 10 Commandments.

He stole 1100 shekels of silver from his mother and she placed a curse on the thief, not knowing that it was her son. It was the fear of the curse that caused Micah to confess his sin and return the money to his mom. Note that it was not the fear of God that motivated him, but the fear of the curse. Micah did not have much of a view of God. .

This very dysfunctional ungodly family is not only seenin the son, but also in the mother. After getting the stolen money back from her son, she should have disciplined him, but instead, she pronounced blessings to her son. Instead of discouragingsuch rebellious action, she praised him in the name of the Lord.

ILLUSTRATION: Parents have the responsibility to train up their children by correcting and admonishing them. Many times, kids act up because parents do not discipline their child. We then wonder why they grow up to be rebellious and have no respect toward their parents. We need to teach them that there are consequences to our actions. [Micah’s mother did not teach him the consequences to bad behavior. ]

And even worse, she dedicated those silver coins to the Lord in honor of herson for returning the money to her. She was so grateful to God that she madean image and an idol. She had a distorted view of God. Actually, when we elevate idols above God, it provokes God to anger. We are stealing His glory by giving it to someone else. To compound this situation, this idol was given to Micah, who added this new idol to his collection of idols in his house. It became his lucky charm. Micah wanted to start his own religion. Since he had these idols, he decided to make one of his sons as his priest. Micah just appointed his own priest. [ Let’s read 17:4-5, “So he returned the silver to his mother, and she took two hundred shekels of silver and gave them to a silversmith, who made them into the image and the idol. And they were put in Micah’s house. Now this man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and some idols and installed one of his sons as his priest.” ] Micah made up his own rules instead of submitting to God’s rules. He did what was right in his own eyes.

[ As you can see, this family is totally spiritually and morally confused, but they think they were serving the Lord. They managed to breakalmost all Ten Commandments. Micah coveted the money, and then he stole it and lied about it. He dishonored his parents. He set other gods before God and made graven image. He broke the 1st , 2nd, 5th, 8th, 9th, and 10thcommandments. ]

APPLICATION: We might laugh at this dysfunctional family. However, some of us are like Micah’s family. We might go to church on Sunday, but we do not practice what we claim to believe the rest of the week. Many families have various idols in their house. Money, prestige, facebook, shopping, and gaming can be idols in disguise in our home. All of these items can be addictive. When we put anything above God, then it can be an idol. Parents, we need to set the right example for our children to follow. May we show our children that living a life in obedience to the Word of God will give us meaning, purpose, and joy.

This section concludes in v.6 with a summary of the condition of those days: “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.” The people did not uphold to God’s standards nor the Law. However, they did whatever they want.[ In the days of Judges, we not only seecorruption in the family, but also corruption in the ministry. Not only God’s people have departed from God’s standards, but also God’s religious leaders. ]

B.  Corruption in the Ministry

Not only did God establish the home and instructed the parents to guide their children, but He also established the worshiping community and instructed the spiritual leaders to guide their flock through the Law. According to the Law, the Aaronic priesthood had the responsibility to lead the people spiritually. However, we see corruption in the ministry.

Another main character was introduced here in verse 7. He was a young Levite from Bethlehem. Levites were not given any land of their own, but they were assigned to live in cities among other tribes. However, Bethlehem was not one of the Judean cities assigned to Levites. This particular Levite was looking for a way to better his life. He was in search of some other place to stay.

On his journey, he came to the home of Micah. When Micah found out that he was a Levite, Micah wanted to hire him to be his personal priest. He offered him a salary and benefits. READ vv.10-12, “Then Micah said to him, “Live with me and be my father and priest, and I’ll give you ten shekels of silver a year, your clothes and your food.” So the Levite agreed to live with him, and the young man was to him like one of his sons. Then Micah installed the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in his house.” This living condition was substantially better than the priestly stipend according to the Law. This young Levite had his wishes fulfilled. However, Levites are not to be priests. They are to assist the priest. The young Levite did that which is right in his own eyes. He would worship God in his own term and not in God’s term. For money, this young man of God was willing to go against God’s Word and to be hired as a priest of an idolater.

A hired priest is not thinking about what God wants, but what man wants. He tells others what they want to hear instead of what God’s truth is. When the Danites asked him in Judges 18:5-6, “Please inquire of God to learn whether our journey will be successful. The priest answered them, “Go in peace. Your journey has the Lord’s approval.” The young Levite did not really consult with God, but told the Danites what they wanted to hear. This reminds me of what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:3, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires.(NASB)”

APPLICATION: As we serve God in ministry, are we going to uphold to God’s truthsor are we going to tickle the ears of our audience? We are not to win popularity contests. Instead, we are to honor God. We are not to be hired priests.

.

Having a Levite as a priest would seeminglylegitimizeMicah worship to God. Micah deceived himself believing that now God would be good to him because this Levite had become his priest as recorded in v. 13. Micah thought God could be bribed and that the Levite was a “good luck charm” as he has his own place of worship.Of course, the Levite then replaces his son as the priest. Levites were dedicated to priestly service,but only those that were the descendents from Aaron were permitted to serve as priest. Therefore, this Levite did not qualified to be a priest. However, this does not really matter because Micah and the Levite did what was right in their own eyes. Micah was probably on cloud 9 having his own god or idol in his house and his own priest. How cool is that! Clearly we see the perversion of the priesthood. God’s name is being humiliated.

[ Because of spiritual corruption, it affects the family, the ministry, and also the society. ]

C.  Corruption in the Society

As we go into the first verse of Judges 18, we are reminded that “in those days, Israel had no king.” God should have been the king in Israel, but the people preferred to “do their own thing.” As a result, the society was corrupted. This is evident as we are introduced to the tribe of the Danites. They were given choice territory by Joshua in Joshua 19:40-48. However, they were not able to defeat the inhabitants. As a result, they had not secured their inheritance among the tribes of Israel. They decided to seek land that was an easier place to possess that had inhabitants that are less intimidating.

Therefore, some spies were sent out to explore the land. As they entered the hill country of Ephraim, they came across the house of Micah and recognized the voice of the young Levite. They had a conversation as to how this Levite ended upthere. He told them that he was hired as a priest. Right away, the spies asked him to inquire of God to learn whether their journey will be successful. The Levite without consulting with God told them to go in peace. Their journey has the Lord’s approval. Here, clearly, the Danites rejected God’s assigned land and coveted another place. This is totally against God’s divine will.

APPLICATION: This is the problem we have in our society today. Instead of submitting to God’s will, we covet what someone else has. People go out and spend money they don’t have on things they don’t need to impress people who don’t really care.

The spies found Laish, which were a people that lived in safety. They were isolated from others and they were prosperous. The spies were excited to report back to the leaders of this perfect place to take over. As they led an army to take this land, they came across the House of Micah. Let us read vv.18-20, “When these men went into Micah’s house and took the carved image, the ephod, the other household gods and the cast idol, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?” They answered him, “Be quiet! Don’t say a word. Come with us, and be our father and priest. Isn’t it better that you serve a tribe and clan in Israel as priest rather than just one man’s household? Then the priest was glad. He took the ephod, the other household gods and the carved image and sent along with the people.” The Danites not only broke into Micah’s house and stole his idols, but also his priest. The young Levite was a hired priest. Since he was offered a better job, he took it. He was now going to be the priest of a tribe instead of a household.

Micah came home and found out that his house was ransacked. He called his neighbors together to pursue the thieves. When they saw that the Danites way outnumbered them and were being bullied, Micah and his friendsturned around and went home. The Danites proceeded to Laish to possessit by killing all the inhabitants and burning the city. [READ v.27, “Then they took what Micah had made, and his priest, and went on to Laish, against a peaceful and unsuspecting people. They attacked them with the sword and burned down their city.” In verses 28-29, it stated that the Danites rebuilt the city and settled there. They named it Dan. Again, we see that they did what was right in their own eyes.

Someone has said that there are three philosophies of life: 1) What’s mine is mine, I’ll keep it; 2) What is yours is mine, I’ll take it; 3) What’s mine is yours, I’ll share it. The Danites followed the second philosophy. Instead, may we recognize that all that we have come from the Lord. May we learn to share what we have with others.

This chapter ends in a very bad note. Let’s read vv.30-31, “There the Danites set up for themselves the idols, and Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Moses, and his sons were priests for the tribe of Dan until the time of the captivity of the land. They continued to use the idols Micah has made, all the time the house of God was in Shiloh.” Instead of worshipping God, who delivered them out of Egypt, they worshipped idols.

When men replace God with idols, moral decay will naturally occur.Theywill worship God on their own terms instead of God’s terms. Their corrupted religious beliefs will affect their family, their ministry, and their society. They do what appears to be right in their own eyes.