

Micah's Improved Religion Judges 17

Introduction

In the last few chapters of Judges, we are given examples of what life was like. There was a lot of confusion about religion, it was hard for communities to survive, and the knowledge of God's law was nearly forgotten. These things resulted in the breakdown of morals and **society**.

Violence increased, people became unfriendly, and religion became a mockery. As society worsened, people cared less and less about each other.

God had designed Israel to be a **theocracy**. He had given them His Law, led them to the Promised Land, and established them in the land. He had commanded, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength* (Deuteronomy 6:5). This love was to be lived out in each individual life through close obedience to His commands. Before his death, Moses had called the people of Israel to, *Choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days* (Deuteronomy 30:19-20). However, we have seen in the Book of Judges that Israel did not love, honor, and obey God as their King. They did not drive out the pagan peoples of the land (Judges 1:27-34). They did not separate themselves from the pagan people, and they did not tear down the altars to the pagan gods (1:2). Instead, they *Did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals; and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods* (2:11-12).

Each Israelite made himself king of his own life, for *everyone did what was right in his own*

eyes. Who is king of your life? How do your actions prove who is king of your life?

Outline of Judges 17

- I. Micah's Household Idols - Judges 17:1-6
- II. Micah's Household Priest - Judges 17:7-13

I. Micah's Household Idols - Judges 17:1-6

A man named Micah lived in the mountains of Ephraim with his mother. He had at least two sons. Eleven hundred pieces of silver had been stolen from Micah's mother, so she declared a curse on the guilty person. Micah just happened to hear her do that. He confessed that he had taken the money, and she immediately gave him her blessing, *May you be blessed by the Lord, my son*. Then his mother explained how she had planned to use the money, *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*. What a strange combination. She planned to dedicate the money to the Lord for her son, but with the intention to use it for making idols.

The idols made were known as "teraphim," meaning "household gods." Earlier in Israel's history, Rachel had stolen her father's teraphim, when she left with her husband, Jacob. He did not know she had done this, and her actions nearly brought disaster (Genesis 31:32). The teraphim had a powerful hold on Rachel even though she knew the true God.

God commanded Israel, *You shall have no other gods before Me* (Exodus 20:3). Also, He commanded, *You shall not make for yourself any 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 (Exodus 20:4-5). God was not unclear about His requirements for His people.

Today, in many countries, teraphim are common. Even in this country, many homes have objects that honor **cults**, mankind, and godlessness (Romans 1:25). Often, they are not displayed as artwork, but are hung on walls, in windows, and placed on shelves to show rebellion against the Holy God, the true Creator of the Universe.

People who try to break a habit are often surprised to find that it has a powerful hold on them. Do you have “household gods?” In other words, are there any TV shows, books, or music that you love more than you love God? The Ephesians voluntarily gave up their books about magic after Paul’s powerful preaching (Acts 19:19). Is there anything in your life you would not want to give up, if you found out that it displeased God? Remember, idols do not always look like carved statues. Idols are anything that you care about more than God. Pastor Dwight L. Moody said simply, “Whatever you love more than God is your idol.”

Some people shrug off pagan idolatry as if it were empty superstition. They know the idols are worthless, as Psalm 115 says. *They have mouths but they do not speak, eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears but they do not hear..... hands but they do not handle; feet they have, but they do not walk. Our God, by contrast, is in heaven, He does whatever He pleases* (Psalm 115:3-7). He lives. He is real.

Micah went along with the idolatry and even brought in a **shrine**. He added an ephod¹ and

more idols. Next, he **consecrated** one of his sons to act as priest. Idolatry is not a simple worship. It is complicated. The idols needed a place, some decoration, and someone devoted to carry out ceremonies to honor them.

Others want the comfort of some kind of supernatural involvement. Like Micah and his mother, they try to be sure they are doing everything they can to get into Heaven by mixing pagan practices with the true worship of God. The problem is that there is nothing man can do to get himself into Heaven (Ephesians 2:8-9). If there was anything that man could do to get himself into Heaven, then there would have been no need for Jesus to come to earth and sacrifice Himself for us. That is why it is so wrong to add unnecessary acts to the true worship of God. It makes what Jesus did on the cross less important. Do you add superstition or practices from other religions to the pure worship of God?

While the story of Micah is told in the book of Judges, two more important themes are introduced. The first is represented in this statement: *In those days there was no king in Israel*. So far, the entire book has shown how Israel continually needs deliverers. The time is coming when the people of Israel will demand to have a king so that they can be like the other nations (1 Samuel 8:19). Sadly, hundreds of years later, God will send the ultimate King, His very Own Son, but the Israelites will refuse to acknowledge Him. Instead, they will demand His death (Luke 19:14; John 1:11).

The second theme is that *everyone did what was right in his own eyes*. When everyone decides for himself what his law is, he will do whatever

1 NOTE: An ephod was a vest-like linen garment designed as part of the official dress of Israel’s high priest (Exodus 28:5-12; Leviticus 8:8). It contained a pouch to hold the urim and thummim which were used by the priests for understanding the will of God (Num-

bers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8). The pagan ephod which Micah made was apparently not a garment but a portable image. However, it may have been designed to be used for a similar purpose.

he wants to do. The result is called anarchy. Anarchy means there is no government, only lawlessness, confusion, and disorder. The Book of Judges has all of these.

II. Micah's Household Priest - Judges 17:7-13

A Levite from Bethlehem in Judah came to the mountains of Ephraim and found himself at Micah's house. Upon meeting the young man, Micah asked where he came from. He learned that the man was a Levite and was looking for a place to stay. Micah must have thought the man was a gift from his 'god.' After all, Micah had wanted a priest so bad, he had made his own son serve as one. And now, here at his own door, stood a man from the tribe of Levi, the one and only priestly tribe. The Levites had not been given an inheritance in the land. Instead, they were designated to do their work by living among the other tribes and being supported by them as they carried out the priestly duties. Joshua had named cities within each tribe where the Levites were to live and minister (Joshua 21:1-42). They had lodging and fields to grow their food, and they were supported by the people.

Micah offered the Levite a place to live, food, clothing, and ten pieces of silver each year. The arrangement was agreed upon. The Levite moved in, became consecrated as Micah's personal priest, and was like one of Micah's sons (17:11). Micah may have believed the Levite's arrival was a sign of God's blessing, but God had established the Levite tribe to serve all the people, not to be the personal hired servant for one man. The fact that the Levite even agreed to the arrangement only lost the people were. Neither the people, nor the Levite tribe with its priests had a proper understanding of God's character and how He was to be worshiped.

Now I know that the Lord will be good to me since I have a Levite as priest. Micah wanted the comfort of religion. In making up his own plan, he moved away from God's commands.

Do you sometimes make up your own plans without thinking of God's commandments? Micah thought God would favor him because he had his own personal priest. He thought religion and success went together. But God does not owe us anything. The good that we receive from Him is of His grace and goodness, not ours (Titus 3:5). Arrogance and superstition are not faith. †

Prayer

Ask your heavenly Father to guard your heart from idolatry and all temptations that would lead you from loving Him alone with all your heart, mind, and soul.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by Grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Vocabulary

society - people living together in organized communities with shared laws, traditions, and values

theocracy - a government in which a country is ruled by religious leaders

cult - a false religion and its worship; considered dangerous and/or extreme

shrine - a case or box where religious objects are placed and worshiped

consecrate - dedicate to a sacred or holy purpose

QUESTIONS FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 13

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.

1. What did you apply to your life from Judges chapter 17 or from the lesson notes?

2. In your own words, explain what the author means by the following phrases:
In those days, there was no king in Israel.

Everyone did what was right in his own eyes

DAY TWO: Read Judges 18:1-6 and Joshua 19:40-48.

3. What theme of Judges is repeated in 18:1?

4. a. What tribe is mentioned?

- b. What does verse 1 say about them?

- c. ? (Thought Question) From the Judges and Joshua passages above, did they really need to *seek out an inheritance*? Why or why not?

5. a. What did the Danites and the Levite have in common?

- b. What did the Danites ask the Levite to ask of God?

- c. What was the Levite's answer?

DAY THREE: Read Judges 18:7-12.

6. What did the Danites observe about Laish and its people? Circle the correct answer(s) and put the verse where you found it next to each.

the land was good

the people were giants

it was a safe place

there were no rulers

they had no allies

crops were diseased

the Sidonians were nearby

they were quiet and secure

they had no idols

7. a. What did the Danites decide to do?

b. According to verse 10, why did they believe they should go after the land?

c. Do you agree or disagree with their reasoning? Give your reason(s).

8. How large was the Danite's army?

DAY FOUR: Read Judges 18:13-26.

9. How did the Danites treat Micah's home?

10. a. How did the Danites tempt Micah's priest?

b. How did the priest respond?

11. How did the Danites treat Micah? Write T (true) or F (false) next to each statement. Give verse for each true statement.

a. T or F vs.____ They sarcastically asked him, "What ails you?"

b. T or F vs.____ They offered to pay for the idols.

c. T or F vs.____ They threatened to kill the priest.

d. T or F vs.____ They threatened to kill Micah.

e. T or F vs.____ They laughed at Micah.

12. What do you think is the saddest statement in Judges 18:13-26? Explain why.

DAY FIVE: Read Judges 18:27-31.

13. a. What did the Danites do to Laish?

b. According to verse 28, why were they able to do this?

c. ♥ (Heart Questions) Who is your Deliverer? See 2 Samuel 22:2 and Psalms 18:2, Psalms 34:4, and Psalms 40:17.

- d. With help from the verses in the question above, why do you need a deliverer?

14. What did the Danites do with Micah's idols? For how long did they do this?

15. a. What do you learn from the following Scripture passages about how the strong should treat the weak?

Acts 3:2-6

Acts 20:35

Romans 15:1-3

1 Thessalonian 5:14

- b. How will you help a weaker person this week?

VOCABULARY FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 13

*"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."*
— Wilfred Funk

DAY ONE: Write the definition of each vocabulary word.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.

1.

2.

3.

DAY THREE: Circle the word’s synonym(s). (Synonym is a word/phrase that means the same thing.)

1. . **cult** following false religion unbelievers

2. . **shrine** sanctuary box fruit

3. . **consecrate** dedicate devote listen

DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.**Word****Definition****consecrate**

a case or box where religious objects are placed and worshiped

society

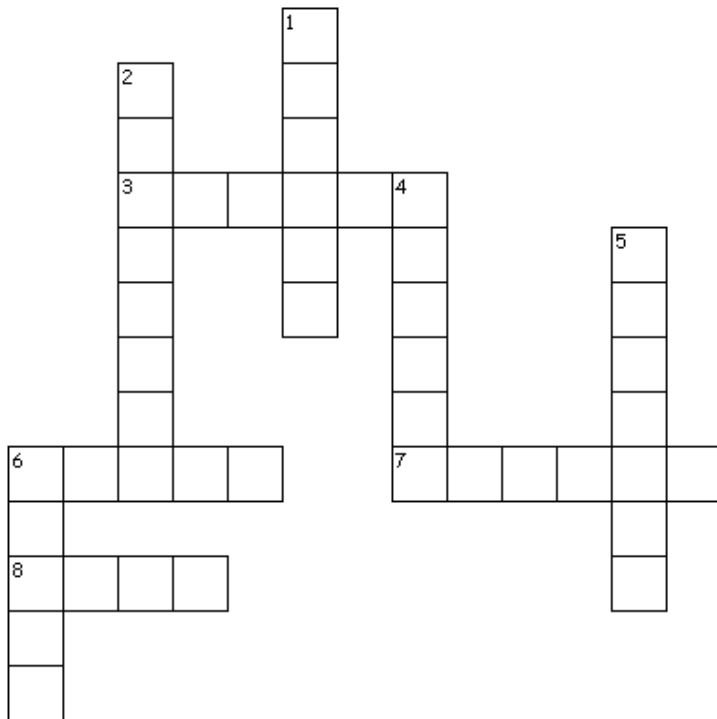
a false religion and its worship; considered dangerous and/or extreme

shrine

dedicate to a sacred or holy purpose

theocracy**cult**

a government in which a country is ruled by religious leaders

DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary words. Try to work from memory.**ACROSS**

3. to get control of by using force, punishment, etc.
6. the sinful nature of human beings
7. name of God, usually translated 'the Lord'
8. a strong desire for something

DOWN

1. to do what someone wants although it is not proper or good
2. to convince someone not to do something
4. a very deep unfriendly feeling, deep hatred
5. to lose or lose the right to as a punishment for an error, offense, or crime
6. lack of good sense or judgment

WORD BANK

subdue
lust
dissuade

flesh
enmity
forfeit

pander
Yahweh
folly