

Judges Chapter 18 Part 3

The theme of the book of Judges:

Judges 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.

Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Indeed, this is what the people during the time of the Judges did. They rejected God as king. They abandoned the covenants and worshiped gods of wood and stone until they were disciplined by God.

1 Samuel 8:7 The Lord said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.”

That amplifies the Judges theme verses. The king was God Himself. Yet they rejected divine authority and substituted human or idol authority. Fellowship with God was possible. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel had personal relationships with God. We have a mandate to exercise our personal relationship with God. One of the applications of the book of Judges to our lives is to not reject God now that we are saved but to seek to exercise our relationship with God and seek His blessings, every day.

Judges Chapter 18 Part 3
Judges Chapter 18

From Proverbs

Proverbs 16:25 (NASB 1995) There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

Proverbs 16:25 (Young's Literal Translation) There is a way right before a man, And its latter end -- ways of death.

This verse in Proverbs tells us the end result of doing what is right in one's own eyes without regard for God's will: ways of death. In a way, this is an extension of the quote from Judges. Proverbs was written after the book of Judges was composed. The author may have had the book of Judges partly in mind when he composed this. The quote from Judges tells us what they did. The Proverbs quote summarizes the result of that: ways of death.

We know from 1 John 5:16 there is a sin unto death. So, this concept from Judges through Proverbs makes its way into the Christian Church.

Individually, as Christians, we are called to be holy like God. And we know this is not possible apart from faith dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 1:4 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,

1 Peter 1:15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;

Judges Chapter 18 Part 3
Judges Chapter 18

1 Peter 1:16 because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

Peter is quoting from the Pentateuch, specifically from

Leviticus 11:44 For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy.

Leviticus 19:2 “Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.

Leviticus 20:7 You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 20:26 Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.

Although the Mosaic covenant is not a document governing the Church, there are principles that are contained in the Mosaic Law that do apply to Christians. Just like the sons of Israel, the Christian believer has been separated from the unbeliever. We are now citizens of heaven and in Jesus Christ (Positional Truth). As such we are to adhere to faith obedience: we are to adhere to the protocol of walking by faith dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit oriented to God’s plan by knowledge of His plan from the Bible.

This is why we study the book of Judges. As I said last week, we will ***NEVER*** lose our salvation. But (like Herman says, BUT!), we can lose rewards and receive discipline in time. Sin has temporal consequences.

Judges Chapter 18 Part 3 Judges Chapter 18

The discipline can be like that experienced by Israelites in the book of Judges. The USA is in a downward spiral. This should cause us not to fear or to hate but to double our efforts to depend on the Holy Spirit and Bible doctrine. And then as James would challenge, we should not just sit on a park bench but allow the Holy Spirit to propel us forward in our Christian lives demonstrating our faith. Each and every believer has at least one spiritual gift which is for the building up of the Church. Paul encourages each believer to use his or her spiritual gifts. And give people the gospel. And then we can ask like Abraham, are there sufficient righteous people in the USA to keep it from being destroyed?

This week we will first review what we have studied so far in chapters 17 and 18 and then complete chapter 18.

Review from last time. Read chapter 17. Then review chapter 18 from verse 1 to verse 10.

One of the important thoughts to take away from the previous study is that pretending to worship God while all the while either worshiping another god or to perform works in human effort in order to please God is wrong. Grace is the operative concept in our lives. God does the doing and we receive. The key is trusting God, continually. We have a relationship. We have fellowship as long as we walk by faith.

When Zephaniah was warning the people of Judah, around 622 BC, prior to the first conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar he recognized that this fake worship was prevalent in his day. The people had not learned and taken to heart the lessons illustrated in the book of Judges, so in the book of Zephaniah he says:

Zephaniah 1:4“So I will stretch out My hand against Judah And against all the inhabitants

Judges Chapter 18 Part 3
Judges Chapter 18

of Jerusalem. And I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, And the names of the idolatrous priests along with the priests.

Zephaniah 1:5 “And those who bow down on the housetops to the host of heaven, And those who bow down and swear to the Lord and yet swear by Milcom,

Zephaniah 1:6 And those who have turned back from following the Lord, And those who have not sought the Lord or inquired of Him.”

Syncretism is the term often used when referring to people who mix a little from this religion and a little from that religion.

How many Christians today go to church and profess to walk by faith and then walk out the door and never return to professing faith until the following Sunday? The rest of the week, they depend on the efforts of the flesh.

Judges 18:11 Then from the family of the Danites, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, six hundred men armed with weapons of war set out.

Previously stated is the observation that the Danites had an army of men equipped and trained for war. God had told the sons of Israel in Judges 3:2 that he left hostile peoples in the land “in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war...”

So the Danites did learn this lesson. And, they were preparing to attack Canaanites and wipe them out. That was also something that God had

Judges Chapter 18 Part 3
Judges Chapter 18

commanded (Deuteronomy 20:16). Soon they will take Micah's priest along for the battle. And God had commanded the sons of Israel to have a priest to give encouragement to the troops:

Deuteronomy 20:2 When you are approaching the battle, the priest shall come near and speak to the people.

Deuteronomy 20:3 He shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be fainthearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them,

Deuteronomy 20:4 for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'

Yet in all they did right, they did it for the wrong reason, at the wrong time and in the wrong place. When they entered the land, they should have won the battle against the Canaanites in the territory allotted to them by trusting the Lord because that was His will for them. But they didn't. The wrong thing done in a right way is still wrong. God gave them land in the book of Joshua (Joshua 19:40-48). They didn't conquer the land that God gave them because they apparently were not trusting God. Now, they wanted to conquer land that was not in their allotted territory. They looked for easy pickings. And their "priest" was an impostor.

Judges 18:12 They went up and camped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah. Therefore they called

that place Mahaneh-dan to this day; behold, it is west of Kiriath-jearim.

Mahaneh-dan means Camp of Dan.

Note, the Danite camp was in Judah, not in the territory that was supposed to belong to the tribe of Dan. The reason is that the Danites had not conquered their own land. The Canaanites had “allowed” them to live in the mountainous region where it was difficult to grow crops.

Judges 18:13 They passed from there to the hill country of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah.

Remember Micah? He was a rich guy on a main road north who bought his own priest to serve him in an idolatrous way.

Judges 18:14 Then the five men who went to spy out the country of Laish said to their kinsmen, “Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod and household idols and a graven image and a molten image? Now therefore, consider what you should do.”

The Danite army apparently doesn’t yet have a camp “chaplain.” The five spies know just where to get one.

Judges 18:15 They turned aside there and came to the house of the young man, the Levite, to the house of Micah, and asked him of his welfare.

Asked him of his welfare. Literally, asked of “his peace.” The word peace is from the word “shalom.”

Judges 18:16 The six hundred men armed with their weapons of war, who were of the sons of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate.

Weapons of war. Interesting play on words here. First they ask the priest of his “peace.” Now the 600 men with weapons of war stood at the front gate. They are about to disturb his peace and essentially kidnap him.

Judges 18:17 Now the five men who went to spy out the land went up and entered there, and took the graven image and the ephod and household idols and the molten image, while the priest stood by the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men armed with weapons of war.

Micah stole his mother’s money. When discovered, she dedicated it to God to make idols/images that that were anti-God/Yahweh. But then held back some of the money she had dedicated. Now the Danites are going to steal the religious anti-God/Yahweh items made from stolen money.

Judges 18:18 When these went into Micah’s house and took the graven image, the ephod and household idols and the molten image, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?”

They violated Micah’s house and stole his idols. The irony is overwhelming. The idols were made with stolen money which was dedicated to God yet used for idol worship which abandoned God. Now an armed group of soldiers breaks into a house and steals the idols as good luck charms to worship instead of God.

Judges Chapter 18 Part 3
Judges Chapter 18

Judges 18:19 They said to him, “Be silent, put your hand over your mouth and come with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be a priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?”

Now the armed soldiers essentially kidnap the priest. They instruct him what his duties will be disregarding any reference to the Torah.

Judges 18:20 The priest’s heart was glad, and he took the ephod and household idols and the graven image and went among the people.

The armed men had convinced the priest that he would be a priest to many rather than the one. He must have thought that this was like a promotion.

Judges 18:21 Then they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the livestock and the valuables in front of them.

The little ones. The word can mean hangers on or household. I suspect that a force of 600 armed men would need support troops. It may be that the support troops are the families of the 600 armed men. Rather than conquer a city in the north and then make a trip back south to pick up their families, they may have taken their families with them as support.

Judges 18:22 When they had gone some distance from the house of Micah, the men who were in the houses near Micah’s house assembled and overtook the sons of Dan.

Judges Chapter 18 Part 3
Judges Chapter 18

Micah gathered the men in his neighborhood who may have been worshipping Micah's idols and using his priest and approached the Danites in order to reason with them.

Judges 18:23 They cried to the sons of Dan, who turned around and said to Micah, “What is the matter with you, that you have assembled together?”

They cried. This can mean summon or to call out to.

What is the matter with you. This is actually a two-word Hebrew idiom. Literally, “What to you?” Jesus uses this idiom when responding to His mother who pointed out that the wedding hosts had run out of wine.

Judges 18:24 He said, “You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and have gone away, and what do I have besides? So how can you say to me, ‘What is the matter with you?’”

Micah is admitting to violations of the covenant. The penalty for this is death. So, if he had pressed the issue until fighting broke out, his band of neighborhood watchers would be slaughtered. He probably thought that he could reason with these people. But, they were on a mission. And on that mission they needed their idols and a priest. These were a substitute for the Tabernacle and priesthood. Whenever we abandon God, we have to come up with substitutes. It started in the Garden when Adam and Eve sinned. They immediately clothed themselves with fig leaves. In their case, they were already spiritually dead as a result of sin.

Deuteronomy 17:2 “If there is found in your midst, in any of your towns, which the Lord

your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, by transgressing His covenant,

Deuteronomy 17:3 and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, which I have not commanded,

Deuteronomy 17:4 and if it is told you and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire thoroughly. Behold, if it is true and the thing certain that this detestable thing has been done in Israel,

Deuteronomy 17:5 then you shall bring out that man or that woman who has done this evil deed to your gates, that is, the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death.

Deuteronomy 17:6 On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.

Deuteronomy 17:7 The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Judges Chapter 18 Part 3
Judges Chapter 18

Micah is admitting, perhaps unknowingly, that he has violated the Mosaic Law and is subject to death. The Danites are in a sense saving him by taking away his sinful objects.

Remember that there are several perspectives inherent in this narrative: 1) the perspective of Micah, 2) the perspective of the Danites and 3) the perspective of the writer who is writing from the divine perspective.

Judges 18:25 The sons of Dan said to him, “Do not let your voice be heard among us, or else fierce men will fall upon you and you will lose your life, with the lives of your household.”

In actuality, Micah should have been put to death at the beginning of chapter 17. But here, Israelites are arguing over who has ownership of these sinful items. So, the Danites are now liable for divine discipline. They could have been wiped out which would have removed a whole tribe from the sons of Israel. God doesn't do that. He has a plan. He allows them to engage in their wrong even if it is done in a right way.

Judges 18:26 So the sons of Dan went on their way; and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house.

Micah lives another day.

Judges 18:27 Then they took what Micah had made and the priest who had belonged to him, and came to Laish, to a people quiet and secure, and struck them with the edge of the sword; and they burned the city with fire.

Judges Chapter 18 Part 3
Judges Chapter 18

No fanfare here. They took what they wanted, attacked a people who were not bothering anyone and destroyed the city with fire. Utterly destroyed it. Again, a right thing done in a wrong way is wrong. And yet, there is a lingering question. If they were so bad, why didn't God discipline them?

Judges 18:28 And there was no one to deliver them, because it was far from Sidon and they had no dealings with anyone, and it was in the valley which is near Beth-rehob. And they rebuilt the city and lived in it.

There was no one to deliver them. They were Canaanites who did not believe in or have a covenant with Yahweh. They also did not have a protector from a human perspective.

Judges 18:29 They called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father who was born in Israel; however, the name of the city formerly was Laish.

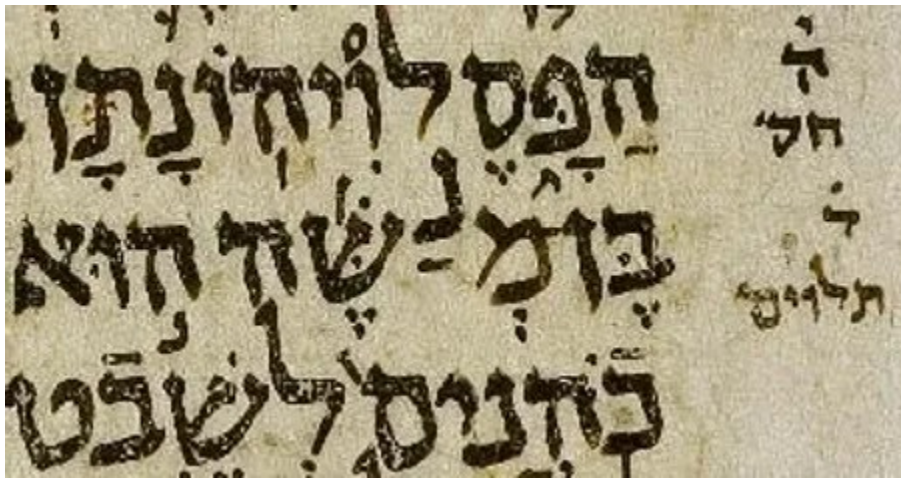
By naming the city "Dan," they were establishing the tribe's presence there. In later Bible passages, the land of Israel will be defined as "from Dan to Beersheba." The Dan referred to is this city which became the northern most point of Israel. It was wrong what they did. But, it became a de facto part of Israel.

Also, "Dan" comes from a word meaning to "judge." In a sense, the Danite warriors "judged" Micah by taking away his idols. If he didn't have any idols to worship, maybe that took away the implied death penalty from him. Canaanites who perhaps should have been defeated, were now exterminated. They had been judged.

Judges Chapter 18 Part 3
Judges Chapter 18

Judges 18:30 The sons of Dan set up for themselves the graven image; and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land.

Manasseh. There is a textual issue here that is recognized in textual criticism. This should be “Moses.” The story goes that the Jewish scribes were horrified that any son of Moses would be a part to setting up and worshiping graven images. So they added an “N” above the text as a “hanging” letter to change Moses into Manasseh. They didn’t actually change the text, but they kinda did.



Note the letter above the line

<https://www.fromreformationtoreformation.com/post/judges-18-30-moses-grandson-an-idolater-what>

From Hebrew commentator and author of a book of textual criticism of the Old Testament Scripture, Tov, says, “This addition was apparently meant to correct an earlier reading that ascribed the erecting of the idol in Dan to one of the descendants of Moses. The addition therefore indicated a deliberate content changed (theological correction).”

Judges Chapter 18 Part 3
Judges Chapter 18

Thomas Constable quotes other commentators: "It is universally agreed that the reference [to Manasseh] was originally to Moses. The reason for the amendment may have been to safeguard the reputation of this great leader by excluding him from the pedigree of this time-serving and idolatrous Levite."

Jonathan. Now we get the name of the priest that originally was Micah's priest. He was a descendant of Moses. In Jewish thought, no son or descendant of Moses would be a part of such idol worship. Yet, we know that Aaron set up the golden calf for Israel to worship while Moses was getting instructions from God. We know that Moses himself sinned when he struck the rock for water rather than speaking to it. For that he was not permitted to enter the land. Just because someone is a great person doesn't mean they don't sin. And their children...

Until the day of captivity of the land. What? If this was written by Samuel in the reign of either Saul or David who could he know about the captivity that happened hundreds of years later?

**Judges 18:31 So they set up for themselves
Micah's graven image which he had made, all
the time that the house of God was at Shiloh.**

The proper place of worship was located at Shiloh which was not that far from where Micah lived. Yet, he set up his own shrine in opposition to the Word of God.

Here is another interesting quote from Thomas Constable

“The Danites were the first tribe to establish public idolatry in Israel. Perhaps this was the reason why their tribe's name does not appear in the list of 12 tribes, that will each produce 12,000 godly Israelite witnesses, during the Tribulation Period (Rev. 7:5-8).”

Judges Chapter 18 Part 3
Judges Chapter 18

But they will be represented in the Millennium. Ezekiel 48:1.

In my own mind, it brought up the issue of instances in which a believer does something demonstratively wrong, yet there is no documented discipline.

Take for example, Abraham when he went places with Sarah. He told her to tell everyone that she was his sister. That was technically correct if you understand she was a half-sister. Other people got in trouble with God when they acted on that half truth. The full truth was that Sarah was Abraham's wife. Look at Genesis chapter 20.

I do not have a good full answer to this. It could be that privately God chastised Abraham. Or not. God had used this incident to identify Abraham as a prophet. He also illustrated the use of intercessory prayer. And Abraham had not lied outright. He had lied by omission.