

## The Bible From 20,000 Feet Part 29 Judges chs. 17 - 21

Tuesday Night Bible Study, June 23, 2009

### --OUTLINE

- MICAH AND HIS ILLIGITIMATE PRIEST
- THE TRIBE OF DAN AND THEIR ILLIGITIMATE INHERITANCE
- CIVIL WAR IN ISRAEL

### --INTRO

--Judges ch. 16 ends the coverage of the 12 judges, and chs. 17-21 give final examples of how deep into sin Israel had fallen.

--the theme phrase throughout Judges is "there was no king in Israel" (Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25)

--rather than walk by faith and follow the Lord as their king they followed the god in their imagination...

--at one point, as we saw in part 27, there was a movement to make Gideon king over Israel, but Gideon replied, "I will not rule over you... the LORD shall rule over you." (Judges 8:23)

--they failed to follow the example of Moses... "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king [of Egypt]; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:27)

--the last four chapters of judges essentially form an exclamation to the point that Israel would have quickly self-destructed and faded into oblivion without God's supernatural preservation...

#### >>ILLUSTRATION A:

--God has supernaturally preserved Israel for nearly 4,000 years in order to complete His master plan of salvation through Christ whose birth and future return are linked to Israel's existence!

--in a sense the preservation of Israel is a signpost pointing to Christ for all generations...

--in Exodus 3:15 God called His relationship with Israel a "memorial for all generations."

--not only does the preservation of Israel point to Christ but it also points to God's faithfulness in spite of our unfaithfulness – the security of our salvation!

--Israel suffered greatly due to God's chastening, but they never lost their national identity... and in like manner, we can suffer greatly due to God's chastening, but our identity in Christ can never be lost – our identity of being righteous before God through Christ and therefore meriting eternal life in heaven!

### --MICAH AND HIS ILLIGITIMATE PRIEST

*17:1 Now there was a man from the mountains of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. ... 5 The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. 6 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. 7*

--Micah worships many different false gods ("household of idols") and uses his son as a priest to these gods, then Micah seeks to add a Levitical priest to his array of idolatrous practices...

*Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah; he was a Levite, and was staying there. 8 The man departed from the city of Bethlehem in Judah to stay wherever he could find a place. Then he came to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. 9 And Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?" So he said to him, "I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am on my way to find a place to stay." 10 Micah said to him, "Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten shekels of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance."*

--personal household priests were completely outside God's design for the Levitical priesthood.

*So the Levite went in. 11 Then the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man became like one of his sons to him. 12 So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and lived in the*

house of Micah. 13 Then Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!"

--Micah was mistaken as his personal priest was completely invalid and therefore spiritually disconnected, like a light unplugged from a power outlet.

## **--THE TRIBE OF DAN AND THEIR ILLIGITIMATE INHERITANCE**

18:1 In those days there was no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for itself to dwell in; for until that day their inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen to them.

--in Judges 1:34 and Joshua 19:40-48 the tribe of Dan is listed as one of the tribes that failed to obtain the land God gave them because of their spiritual weakness. Judges 1:34: "And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, for they would not allow them to come down to the valley."

2 So the children of Dan sent five men of their family from their territory, men of valor from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and search it. They said to them, "Go, search the land." So they went to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there.

--rather than turning from their sinful ways in order to inherit the land that God originally gave them, the tribe of Dan went further into sin and sought to take land that God did not give them.

3 While they were at the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite [they recognized his accent and knew that he was from a different region]. They turned aside and said to him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What do you have here?" 4 He said to them, "Thus and so Micah did for me. He has hired me, and I have become his priest." 5 So they said to him, "Please inquire of God, that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous." 6 And the priest said to them, "Go in peace. The presence of the LORD be with you on your way."

--Micah and the tribe of Dan were essentially following the god of their imagination, and the illegitimate priest gave voice to their imaginary god and told them what they wanted to hear.

--application in our lives: as Christians we are called to speak the truth... often times this means telling people what they don't want to hear, but we must look past the present discomfort and see the consequence that follows...

--if people are living in rebellion to the truth, they are walking down a path that leads to destruction, and if we only tell them what they want to hear we are encouraging them down the path of destruction.

--James 1:15: "sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" – death on many different levels, including death to blessings that God wants to give us.

--Galatians 6:7-9: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."

--people may live in sin and appear to prosper for a season, but the ultimate consequence is eternal.

--as we'll see, the tribe of Dan will appear to prosper for a season, but their way of living ultimately leads to devastating consequences for Israel.

7 So the five men departed and went to Laish. They saw the people who were there, how they dwelt safely, in the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure. There were no rulers in the land who might put them to shame for anything. They were far from the Sidonians, and they had no ties with anyone. 8 Then the spies came back to their brethren at Zorah and Eshtaol, and their brethren said to them, "What is your report?" 9 So they said, "Arise, let us go up against them. For we have seen the land, and indeed it is very good. Would you do nothing? Do not hesitate to go, and enter to possess the land. 10 When you go, you will come to a secure people and a large land. For God has given it into your hands, a place where there is no lack of anything that is on the earth."

--the spies of Dan's illegitimate campaign echoed the voice of the spies that Joshua sent.

--on the outside it could appear to some that they were doing the right things as they acted in the name of God and sought a false blessing through the false priest and went through the motions of their forefathers in sending spies and returning with a good report about the land (Joshua sent spies into the land before battle)

--Jesus' words to the Pharisees could be applied to the tribe of Dan: "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 7 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" (Mark 7:6-7)

11 And six hundred men of the family of the Danites went from there, from Zorah and Eshtaol, armed with weapons of war... 27 So they took the things Micah had made, and the priest who had belonged to him, and went

*to Laish, to a people quiet and secure; and they struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire. 28 There was no deliverer, because it was far from Sidon, and they had no ties with anyone. It was in the valley that belongs to Beth Rehob. So they rebuilt the city and dwelt there. 29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born to Israel. However, the name of the city formerly was Laish. 30 Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan"*

--interesting side note: the oldest known mud-brick arch is located at the entrance of the city of Dan  
--until the arch was excavated in 1979 it was thought that arch passageways were invented by the Romans over 1200 years later.

--archaeologists have concluded that they arches were filled in and converted to a regular doorway not long after their original construction due to the humidity in the region.

--it has also been conjectured by archaeologists that foreigners built the arches as they may have been unaware of the effect of the high humidity in the area. Could the foreigners have been the tribe of Dan when they "burned the city... rebuilt the city and dwelt there." (Judges 18:27-28)

--on their way to conquer the land that they unlawfully chose, the tribe of Dan pillaged Micah's house and bribed his hired Levite priest to be their priest... an illegitimate priesthood in an illegitimate land.

--in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC after the Kingdom of Israel split in two, King Jeroboam of the northern kingdom walked down a similar path as the tribe of Dan and set up an illegitimate priesthood for an illegitimate kingdom... on one level, the compromise and corruption under the tribe of Dan was followed by a greater compromise and corruption under Jeroboam (rather than 1 tribe it was 10 tribes)

--1 Kings 12:28-32: "the king [Jeroboam] made two golden calves. He said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." 29 One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. 30 And this thing became a sin; the people went even as far as Dan to worship the one there. 31 Jeroboam built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites. 32 He instituted a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the festival held in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar."

--Bethel and Dan took the place of Jerusalem as the central place of worship.

--practical lesson... an indirect lesson that can be drawn from the pattern of Jeroboam's corruption tracing the steps of Dan's corruption is that smaller compromise and sin if not dealt with properly will often lead to greater compromise and sin.

## **--CIVIL WAR IN ISRAEL**

--the book of judges ends with a picture of a city in Israel that resembled Sodom and Gomorrah.

--the sin of a handful of men in this Benjamite city led to civil war in Israel where tens of thousands of Benjamites were killed with only 600 escaping death.

--and so we see the ultimate result of sin – "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)

--another lesson seen here is that many times a person's sin not only affects themselves but creates a domino affect where many people are affected!

--the civil war began when leaders from throughout Israel demanded that the tribe of Benjamin surrender the guilty men and they refused...

--God led Israel to wage war on the tribe of Benjamin as a form of judgment, but after the army of Benjamin was defeated the rest of Israel pressed the war beyond where God led them and ended up slaughtering almost the entire tribe and burning all their cities to the ground.

--the irony there was that they unleashed on their own people the vengeance they were supposed to unleash on the Canaanites.

**--in conclusion, the book of judges leaves us with a startling picture of Israel heading straight into the ground, which highlights God's supernatural preservation of Israel in order to fulfill His master plan of salvation!**

--truly, God's preserving relationship with Israel is a "memorial to all generations!" (Genesis 3:15)