

We now enter the “post judge” portion of the book of Judges. We might call these the Godless chapters: Neither the Lord nor his Spirit appoint any new judges, send messages via prophets, or intervene in Israel’s fate. The only mention of the Lord is the complacent assumption of His favor in 17:13 and 18:6.

We recognize, of course, that the Lord has not abandoned His people; they have deserted Him. And in a way that makes it almost impossible for Him to restore them.

In previous chapters, we read of the increasing numbers of Israelites turning to idolatry. But foreign gods at least stayed distinct for a time. A man or woman knew whether they were worshiping the Lord or an idol. But now Micah has introduced an unholy mixture: His graven image (carved wood with a silver overlay), cast silver idol, ephod, and hired priest are connected not to Baal or Dagon but to the worship of Jehovah!

How could the Lord now help these people? They would not know whether to thank Him for their aid, or thank their idolatrous images that in their minds represent Him – an intolerable intermingling of worship and idolatry. “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons” (1 Cor. 10:21).

This is consistent with other commandments against mixtures, like the blending of linen and wool prohibited in Deuteronomy 22:11. We find a warning for us in

2 Timothy 2:20;21: “Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself *from what is dishonorable*, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.” In the original, “*from what is dishonorable*” is “*from these things*.” Many commentators think this means we are to cleanse ourselves from the confusing and misleading *mixture* of believers and unbelievers in the visible church. How? By gathering with those who call on the Lord out of a pure and unmixed heart. “In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy” (1 Peter 3:15).

Notes

17:2, 4 Eleven hundred shekels of silver would be about 28 pounds. Two hundred shekels would weigh about 5 pounds.

17:7 Levites were not to be priests themselves, only assistants.

18:1 The tribe of Dan had been given an inheritance (Joshua 19:40-47) but had failed to occupy it (Judges. 1:34-35).

18:2 Zorah and Eshtaol were in Judeah, about 15 miles west of Jerusalem.

18:7 Laish, later called Dan, was north of the sea of Galilee, about 100 miles from Zorah and Eshtaol. Jeroboam set up one of his golden calves in Dan (1 Kings 12:29-30), continuing the tradition of idolatry described in 19:31. Sidon was and is a major city of Lebanon, outside the bounds of Israel.

Questions:

1. What violations of the law concerning priests can you find in Chapter 17?
2. What violations of simple ethics – right versus wrong – can you find in these two chapters?
3. What prompts Micah to return the money he stole from his mother? Is Micah just a youth?

4. What is contradictory in 17:10-11? Is there an application for today?
5. In verse 17:13 Micah believes he has secured the Lord's blessing? Why does he think so? Is he right?
6. Why is the city of Laish a tempting target for the Danites? Why might the Lord allow them to be taken?
7. What is God's purpose in setting up kings, according to scripture? How is the lack of a king apparent here (18:1)?
8. In verse 18:30, the Levite's name is revealed to be Jonathan. Who is his grandfather? Does Jonathan have a priestly character? What lessons are there for leaders over God's people?