

## Episode #542 Judges 17 – Micah, His Mother, and a Levite

I. In the book of Judges, we have a brief record of the early history (the first centuries) of the history of the land of Israel. We see the leaders God chose, judges, who ruled under Jehovah, the King. Through the lives and work of these judges, we can learn about God's works and ways.

II. Having completed our study of Samson, the twelfth judge, the book of Judges now takes a trip back in time, leaving I Samuel to continue the story in order. We are back to when the Israelites were not all settled in their territory (chapter 18) and Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, is still alive (20:28). Having studied the governmental history and of Israel, we now will study this period from several other standpoints.

III. The Remainder of Judges: Back in Time.

A. Now, before we leave this historical period, there are several other things the LORD wants to deal with. Instead of breaking up the cycle of judges and their history, He has left this portion until a separate section.

1. The start of major idolatry and the major center of idolatry in Israel. This sad practice continued throughout the history of Israel and never was interrupted up to the day of their captivity.
2. The story of the tribe of Benjamin. By the time we get to Saul, Benjamin is the smallest and least significant tribe. Why? This was not true earlier. How did this happen? This story emphasizes the early corruption of their morals.

B. E.W. Bullinger: first God shows the political decline (1-16), then the religious decline (17-18), then the moral decline (19-21).

IV. The theme of this last section of Judges is stated in Judges 17:6 and 21:25.

- A. In a way, no human king was a good thing, for God was their true King. The problem was they did not acknowledge Him!
- B. Compare this situation to today. God has been silent for nearly two thousand years. What do men, even Christians, do? Why, whatever is right in their own eyes!
- C. What should the Israelites have done? Whatever was right in the eyes of God! But who really cared about this?
- D. What is the result of everyone doing what he personally thinks is right? The answer as we see it in this section: chaos! And that is just what we are seeing today.
- E. This section, as sad and messy as it is, has a real message for today. This is what happens when we do what is right in our own eyes rather than God's. The result is always a mess! Let us learn to put God's view first over our own.

V. Micah and his mother. Judges 17:1-4.

A. Judges 17:1. Micah = Michayehu, Who Is Like the LORD? Back to the days of Othniel in the early days of Judges.

B. Verse 2. He admits to stealing eleven hundred pieces of silver from his own mother (remember, the same amount the Philistines paid Delilah for betraying Samson). She blesses (speaks well of) him for stealing! (Since she got the money back; she did not care about her son's morality, it seems.)

C. Verse 3. She had dedicated to the Jehovah to make a graven image? But this was entirely contrary to His law! Note her total ignorance of what would please Him.

D. Verse 4. He returns the money to her, and she takes it to the silversmith to make the carved and molded image. "Wholly" dedicated means two hundred of eleven hundred? Notice the total hypocrisy of every action in this section! In Micah's household.

## VI. Micah's Levite. Judges 17:5-13.

- A. Micah is a shameless idolater. An ephod = a priestly garment. Household idols = Hebrew Teraphim = ancestor worship, perhaps a clay tablet with their ancestors' names on them; corrupted to be worshiped. He brings his children into it as well.
- B. Verse 6. Was this good or bad? It could mean local corruption, it could also mean local faithfulness (Bethlehem in Ruth). A wicked king dragged the whole nation down. Consider: similar to our localized state governments before Abraham Lincoln, FDR. Later local authority overtaken by a strong, central government.
- C. Verse 7. A Levite living in Judah (remember, the Levites were scattered among the other tribes). Compare Judges 18:30: this man was Moses' grandson.
- D. Verse 8. Lack of faithfulness to Jehovah put the Levites out of work. He happens to come to the hill country of Ephraim and the house of Micah.
- E. Verse 9. Micah questions him, and learns he is looking for work.
- F. Verse 10. He offers him employment. Again note the hypocrisy: this is a young man, and Micah has grown sons. How could a man younger than he be his "father"? He offers him gainful employment as his priest. Note: a hireling, not a man of God.
- G. Verse 11. This becomes a permanent arrangement, and he becomes like a son to Micah. Note: not a father. But he is quick to leave his "father" in chapter 18 when he gets a better offer!
- H. Verse 12. Moses' grandson becomes the priest to one of Israel's leading idolaters!
- I. Verse 13. Why would Yahweh be good to him when he is an idolater? Just because he has a Levite priest? Micah's every religious thought brims with ignorant hypocrisy! Note the confusion of God's truth with false religion, common in our day.

VII. Judges 17 shows us the religious decline of Israel. Micah and his mother are stunning examples of hypocrisy in their every action. She blesses Micah for stealing from her. She wholly dedicates money to the LORD to make an idol. Wholly dedicated translates to two hundred of eleven hundred. Thus they become some of the original idolaters of Israel. At first Micah's son becomes their priest, but when Jonathan, Moses' grandson, comes looking for work, he makes him his priest. He calls a younger man "father," though he really becomes like his son. He thinks Jehovah will be pleased with him for having a Levite as his priest, when what the Levite is doing is serving idols. We might find such hypocrisy stunning, but is it really so unusual? How many Christians can be just as hypocritical in the ways they imagine they are "serving the Lord"? We need to serve Him in the ways He sets it up in His Word, not in the ways we make up in our own minds. Let us learn an important lesson from the blatant hypocrisy of the man Micah.