

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

"The Plague of Idolatry"

Judges 17, 18.

Introduction

1. Samson is the last of the recorded judges of this book. With him comes the last deliverance from the enemies of the nation. No further deliverances are recorded in this book.

2. The last five chapters are unique. They tell of more sin in Israel. Two are specific: idolatry and moral corruption. This was early in their history. These chapters are not chronological. Why? Because 1) Dan would probably have moved early in his occupation of the land; 2) The Danite movement is mentioned in Joshua (19:47) and that book was written while Rahab was still alive (6:25). Hence, these items were prevalent throughout Israel history during the days of the judges.

3. The continuous narrative of these two chapters is full of other deviations from the truth of God. At least six other failures in the nation are given:

1. The failure to OCCUPY the land 18:1, 2.

God had specifically commanded that the tribes were to occupy the land fully (Ex. 23:2-33; 34:10-16; Num. 33:51-56; Deut. 7:1-5). Judges 1 tells the sad story of failure to occupy the land provided (vv. 21, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34). Dan specifically was unable to get to the lowlands of his allotment.

But the point made in these chapters is this: Dan, in failing to occupy the land given to them, decided rather to get other land than that assigned to him. This was wrong. This was not God's directive. Hence, a tribe refused to accept God's provision and sought out its own way.

2. The failure to GATHER for worship 17:5, 13; 18:30, 31.

God ordered that the tabernacle be set up in Shiloh (Deut. 12:4-14; 16:1-7). One principle reason for the central place of worship was the unification of the nation. In fact, God prescribed that every male appear before the Lord at the tabernacle three times each year (Ex. 23:14-17). Obviously sacrifices were also to be placed on the altar, too. These are carefully set out in Leviticus. It was necessary that all the ceremonies of God be carried out there. Both Micah and the tribe of Dan transgressed this intent of the Lord. While the New Testament does not prescribe a specific place of worship, it does call for gatherings and assemblies (Heb. 10:25).

3. The failure to HONOR the true God 17:5; 18:20.

The Bible is clear that there is but one only true God (Deut. 6:4,5). It is our persuasion that this is a trinitarian God (i.e. He is one in essence, but three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Micah arranged for two images (17:3) and some household gods called teraphim (17:5; cf. Gen. 31:19, 30-35). The Mosaic economy legislated against such (Ex. 20:4). Here is clear disobedience to the will of God. There is no doubt as to the influence of the Canaanites. Oh, if Israel had obeyed the Lord and rid the land of these enemies!

4. The failure to ACCEPT God's assignment. 17:7; 18:20.

The Levite who is mentioned in these chapters is described as "seeking a place where he might dwell" (17:8). This suggests that he was out looking for employment. He was an opportunist of the day. He wasn't satisfied with the appointment which God had given him. He wanted some place which might yield more for himself. There were Levitical cities (Num. 35:1-8; Josh. 21:1-41). He was moving from Bethlehem and that isn't even listed as a Levitical city! Apparently, he had left the city of his assignment. When it is stated he was "of the family of Judah" (17:7), it means he lived in that area; he was not of that tribe, for he was a Levite. Apparently he was in that area because where he was assigned, the land had not been occupied, since only priests were assigned to Judah (Josh. 21:9-19). In any case, he was wrong in his movement.

5. The failure to DEDICATE leadership 18:30.

Micah's priest was a descendant of Moses, but not of Aaron. The law prescribed that only Aaron's sons were qualified for the priesthood (Ex. 28, 29). Micah may have felt that getting someone directly from Moses was acceptable, but not so! Interestingly, a scribe has tried to soften having a descendent of Moses as an idolatrous priest. The attempt has been made to get the name Manasseh out of the consonants for Moses here. This is an emendation and cannot be supported. The text stands: Moses!

6. The failure to REJECT stealing 17:2; 18:23.

Both Micah and the Danites stole what did not belong to them. Apparently Micah's mother did not see stealing as God does (cf. 17:2, 3). Even Dan did not respond to the pleas of Micah when they did the same thing (18:23). Nonetheless, the Word of God stands (Ex. 20:15; Rom. 13:9).

Conclusion Sin breeds sin, both from an individual and tribal. The record stands: Israel sinned. What a testimony for us (1 Cor. 10:11). Give us a sensitivity to do His will!