

# Judges 17

**Introduction to Chapters 17-21** – The book of Judges began with two introductory passages and now concludes with two appendices. We know we have moved to another section when we see that there are no more stories about judges delivering Israel. Look closely and notice that these stories do not take place after Samson's death, but most likely before the first judges came upon the scene. Moses' grandson is mentioned in Judges 18:30, and Aaron's grandson in Judges 20:27-28. Their placement here at the end is to emphasize what went wrong in Israel and why she fell into idolatry so often. The first appendix is contained in Chapters 17-18, and we consider here the first section.

**Parody of the Exodus** – Moses delivered the people of Israel, and through him, God established a house of worship, a priesthood, and the promise of conquest of a land. Chapter 17 perverts this history of an established worship and priesthood, and Chapter 18 will pervert the story of the conquest. This parody displays for us why Israel falls into such apostasy time and again throughout the following generations (the last 16 chapters of Judges), and is told through the life of the priest who is the grandson of the same Moses.

**A False Tabernacle (17:1-6)** – Samson had been betrayed with 1100 pieces of silver, and here we see again 1100 pieces of silver surrounding the betrayal of the Lord. Micah stole the silver from his mother, but returns it because he feared the curses she had uttered. There is no restitution, however (according to Lev 6:1-7) and there is no going to offer a trespass offering either.

**This Mother's Seed** – This unnamed mother has dedicated the silver to the Lord, but then uses it to make a carved image and a molded image. She isn't giving birth to a seed who will trample the serpent. She is giving birth to an 'antichrist' of sorts. This son is in the people of God, believes he is blessed by God (v2, 13), but is openly breaking the second commandment. He has a shrine (a false tabernacle), an ephod (a false garment for fortune-telling), and household idols (teraphim – little messengers to gods, as opposed to seraphim). Then he sets up his son as the priest of his own worship-house.

**"There was no king in Israel"** (v6) – Had there been a king who loved and kept God's covenantal standards, this kind of activity would have been stopped. Deut 13 and 17 teach us that idolatry (including syncretism) is not only a sin, but a crime against society. More importantly, there was no recognition of the Lord as King, but Israel was not serving Him. They did whatever they thought was right in their own eyes.

**A False Priesthood (17:7-13)** – The Levites were taken by the Lord in place of all the firstborn of Israel. They were to represent God to Israel. They lived in appointed cities because they had no land, and they also served in the towns of Israel, more or less like pastors of synagogues. The Levite was to bring forth the true Word in true worship, showing forth the true Husband of Israel to the Bride. When he failed, the Bride goes whoring after other husbands. Think back over the last 16 chapters of Judges – where were the Levites?

**Micah is "Blessed"** – In Micah's eyes, things just continue to get better. A Levite from Bethlehem (the house of bread) comes looking for work. But he is not going to bring the 'Bread of Life' with him. Building upon the 1100 pieces of silver, this betraying priest is hired to serve in a false tabernacle before false idols in perverted worship. This priest will even get a suit of clothes (instead of Aaron's garments of glory and beauty).

**"a father and a priest..."** – This shouldn't be missed. The priest is supposed to represent the Husband to the Bride. Priests are also to be like fathers, leading and protecting and teaching their flock. But this priest becomes 'like one of his sons', manipulated by Micah rather than rebuking him (Mal 2:7-9). Micah is the perfect Baal-worshipper. He manipulates the gods; he does not submit to the Lord. Once he determines that he has them under control, he believes that the Lord will bless him for sure.

**The Glory of the True Tabernacle and the True Priesthood** – The tabernacle at Shiloh and later, the temple in Jerusalem, were simply shadows, as was the levitical priesthood. We are the reality – the temple of God is the body of Christ and we are the priesthood, under our High Priest, according to the order of Melchizedek.

**Our Worship Temptations** – But we are tempted to worship God as we see fit, without regard for his commands. We are tempted to try to manipulate God with our 'good works' or hypocritical, outward worship. We can fool men, but God sees the heart (Matt 15:8-9).

**Our Priesthood Temptations** – We are tempted to hire those who will tickle our ears, amuse us with a good stand-up routine, and finish with an inspirational message.

**Christ: Bread of Life and Fullness of Joy** – The temptation is not beaten down for very long if we are simply 'doing what is right.' Eyes of faith must see this gathering as the place of glory, delight, strength, and satisfaction. Ears of faith must hear the Word of the Lord as life itself, and mouths must sing the psalms as our songs of deliverance and victory. They must taste the bread and the wine and know by faith they are partaking of Christ's body and blood. These people would not miss this gathering for anything (Psalm 84, Heb 10:25, Acts 2:46-47).

**To the Husbands and Fathers** – We have a responsibility to lead, protect, and teach our wives and children in such a way that

songs, like Psalm 84, are on the lips of our family come Sunday morning. The roots of idolatry and priestcraft (worshipping “God” as I define him/her in the way I find most appealing) must be pruned from our hearts so that we delight in nothing more than being with God, in His Word, before Him in worship with His people, reminded that we are His and He is ours, declared clean by His atonement alone, empowered by His Holy Spirit, and sent as His ambassadors to take the land in His name. And this overwhelming responsibility, rightly understood, will keep you very close to God’s house, God’s Word, God’s people, and God’s ways.

*Dave Hatcher – May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003*

***“O Lord of hosts, how blest is he who places all his trust in Thee!”***