

Judges 18

Introduction – In the days of Moses and the Exodus, the Lord led His people out of Egypt, built His house, established His priesthood, sent His spies and conquered the land, burning the first city, Jericho. This section (17-18) is a replay of history, but in a distorted parody. The point of the irony is to reveal in this appendix how the people of Israel, during the times of the Judges, continued to miss the mark, fall into the sin of idolatry, and find themselves under God’s wrath. We would do well to see how easy it is for us as His people today to miss the mark, and how important it is to walk in faithfulness.

The Danites in the House of Micah (vv1-2) – In the days when there was no king in Israel, and long before these cities brought forth the mighty Samson, the Danites were unable to conquer the portion of the land that had been given to them. These are the details of the story of the Danite compromise mentioned in 1:34 and even back in Joshua (19:47f). Unable to establish their promised inheritance, they seek to establish their own.

The Danites with the Priest of Micah (vv3-6) – These spies, ‘*valiant men*’, recognize the voice of the apostate priest. “*I have become Micah’s priest,*” he says in verse 4. He is not the Lord’s priest. But these spies know that he has ‘a gift’ and they ask him to predict their future. They do not go to Shiloh, where God should be sought. They go to this priest, and he tells them just what they want to hear.

Whose Voice Can You Recognize? – Literally and figuratively, whose voice catches your ear and heart? These spies were not only attracted to the priest’s voice, but to his worldview and religion. He so easily combined Jehovah with easier and more personal forms of worship and obedience. He catered to felt needs. They were sure that he would know the mind of God. But Jesus says, “*My sheep hear My voice,*” (John 10:27). Like these spies, we too can convince ourselves in our busy-ness, that we are serving God. We become ignorant fools, self-justifying our obvious transgressions.

Recruiting the People to Take “the Land” (vv7-12) – The spies return with news that the land is good and an attack could be successful. Besides, “*God has given it into your hands,*” they say. The first spies during the Exodus were afraid to trust the Lord and go into the land. These spies are not afraid, but what looks like trusting the Lord, is really their justification to disobey. Circumstances are overshadowing principle. And this becomes even more obvious when they arrive at Micah’s house.

Recruiting the People to Take “the gods” (vv13-21) – The spies tell the men, “consider what you should do.” (v14). What should they have done? The law required that they burn Micah and his shrine to the ground. What do they do? They are going to take a land, they will need a priest and an altar, and they see that God must be providing. There is even a great promotion for their good friend, the priest. As they proceed, the priest “*took his place among the people.*” (v20). Contrast this with Num 2:17.

Who Do You Know, Who Do You Love? – What is the test for whether you know God? “*Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments*” (1 John 2:3). What is the test for whether you love God? “*If you love me, keep my commandments*” (John 14:15). These Danites claimed to know God, claimed to love God, claimed to be blessed by God. They were self-deceived.

Manhandling Micah (vv 22-26) – Micah was a thief and an idolater. In the end, his gods cannot stop from being stolen. The thief is robbed, and the idolater’s gods are in the control of men. God is just and your sins will find you out.

Manhandling Laish (vv 27-29) – Just like Jericho, the Danites come in and burn the first city of their conquest to the ground. The Lord had called for holy war and in certain cases whole cities were to be utterly destroyed. The people were to represent the Lord’s holy fire of judgment. But who is their *god* this time? This is no offering to the Lord. This is strange fire from a strange priesthood and a strange altar.

Final Tribute to Dan (vv 30-31) – This is all irony. Dan has come from Israel, Jonathan has come from Moses, and the carved images are the new gods. At every step, they have been successful. But the catch is, these gods cannot save. So this happy ending only lasts “*until the day of the captivity of the land*”, the day the Philistines come in and take over.

Happy Endings Are No Guarantee, Faithfulness Is – Your church grows. Your nation wins. Your company prospers. You are promoted. Are these signs of blessing? Underneath the circumstances, we must ask the more fundamental question – is there faithfulness? If there is, then we may receive these things as blessings. If there is not, we must understand that while there may be an appearance of blessing and success in the eyes of the world, it will end in captivity. Your sin will be taken away in Christ, or your sin will become your master.

Jesus Christ, the Faithful Prophet, Priest, and King of Israel – He kept God’s covenant faithfully, even in the fear of the garden of Gethsemane. He did not live for Himself. He died for you. And the Lord has rewarded Him by giving Him all the nations.

Manmade gods or the Son of God? – Jesus Christ is the temple where you meet God. He is the Mediator who reveals God and brings you to God for blessing. He is the One who has the inheritance that can never perish. But if you forsake Him, your manmade gods will not save you, and you will be lost.