

OUR GOD'S FAILURES & FAITHFULNESS

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Part 21 — “The Spiritual Chaos of Ignorance & Unbelief”— October 12, 2025

Introduction: The First Conclusion of Judges

The first portion of the conclusion to the book of Judges is set in parallel with the second introduction. There, in 2:6-3:6, we saw the Lord's perspective on the failure of Israel to complete the conquest of Canaan and her initial descent into apostasy which set the stage for the rest of the book. In the first conclusion, we are presented with two intertwined accounts that illustrate the final spiritual condition of Israel as the period of the judges comes to an end.

Main Point: When God has spoken, ignorance is never an _____ for the unbelief and disobedience of His people.

Judges 17:1-18:31

The initial portion of the conclusion to the book of Judges demonstrates Israel's sorry spiritual condition. This is presented on an individual level through the accounts of a wealthy man named Micah and a traveling Levite. On a tribal level, it is demonstrated through the cowardice and thieving of the people of Dan.

Exposition:

I. In Ephraim, a man named _____ sought to establish his fortunes through unauthorized worship practices. (17:1-13)

Observations:

(1) The account begins in the middle of an incident where a wealthy family had “lost” a large amount of money.

“the silver is with me; I took it”

(2) Likely in an attempt to undo the previously uttered curse, the mother sought to bless Micah and then dedicated the silver to the Lord.

⇒ A portion of the silver was given to a silversmith who made it into an _____.

(3) Micah sought to use the idol, along with other cultic objects to set up a religious _____ on his property.

“he made an ephod and household gods, and ordained one of his sons”

⇒ The refrain of v.6 serves as a commentary on the _____ nature of Micah's actions.

“Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

(4) At some point, Micah encountered a _____ travelling from Bethlehem.

“It is...possible...he was wandering the countryside in order to exploit the common people by exacting revenue in exchange for providing cultic services.”—Boda & Conway

(5) Micah offered to hire the Levite to serve as his personal _____, anticipating that this would bring the Lord's favor.

Key Points: Worldly success can at times lead us to assume that our _____ in life are honoring to the Lord.

The possibility of financial gain is often how we are _____ to compromise the truth.

II. Having failed to conquer the land allotted to them, people from the tribe of _____ set out to find another place to establish themselves. (18:1-10)

Observations:

(1) The opening refrain sets the stage for what is to follow and explains the _____ of proper leadership.

“In those days there was no king in Israel.”

(2) The tribe of Dan had _____ to take control of the land given to them by Joshua (Josh. 19:40-48).

- (3) The Danites sent _____ to scout Laish (Leshem) and they encountered the Levite while staying in Micah's home.
"The journey on which you go is under the eye of the Lord."
- (4) The Danite spies then returned and told their brethren that the land was theirs for the taking.
 ⇒ The story is in many ways a _____ version of the original spying out of the land of Canaan.

Key Point: Disobedience is often _____ than trusting the Lord and following His commands.

III. The Danites sought to acquire the means by which to establish their own religious shrine as they migrated to the North. (18:14-31)

Observations:

- (1) The Danite force surrounded Micah's property in order to _____ his cultic objects.
- (2) The Danites added _____ to their sin of theft.
"Is it better for you to be priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?"
- (3) The Levite's corruption is shown in his willingness to enable idolatry on a _____ and not merely household level.
"He took the ephod and the household gods and the carved image and went along with the people."
- (4) The confrontation between Micah and the Danites revealed their particular _____.
- (5) The ignorance & disobedience of both Micah and the Danites had long term consequences.
 ⇒ Rather than bringing the Lord's blessing, Micah's idols _____ him.
"The man who stole the silver for the idols has his idols stolen from him. He returns to his home...without his money, his gods, and his priest—and the reader hears no more about him." —Boda & Conway
 ⇒ Rather than bringing blessing to the Danites, the idols became a source of ongoing _____.
"There is...foreshadowing...of the future shrines set up at Bethel and Dan by Jeroboam I in competition with Jerusalem after the division of the kingdom. The roots of...apostasy penetrate deep into Israel's history."—Boda & Conway

Key Point: The disregard for God's _____ often has consequences that arise in the long term.

Individual:

Communal:

Assessing the First Conclusion

- **The accounts of Micah and the Danites demonstrate the _____ of Israel on an individual and tribal level.**
"Rather than following the law and submitting to the care and guidance of YHWH, both Micah and the Danites attempt to seize control of their own fates, Micah by establishing a shrine with a priest by which to ensure—or coerce—YHWH's blessing, and the Danites by locating and procuring land that is much easier for them to subjugate than their allotted inheritance."—B&C
- **The account of the Levite demonstrates the _____ failings of the religious leadership in Israel.**

Applying the Text

- **The NT authors also _____ us of the dangers of ignorance and unbelief.**
Heb. 2:1-4—¹ Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, ⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

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Main Point: When God has spoken, ignorance is never an excuse for the unbelief and disobedience of His people.

Judges 17:1-18:31

The initial portion of the conclusion to the book of Judges demonstrates Israel's sorry spiritual condition. As this period of her history comes to a conclusion, this is presented on an individual level through the accounts of a wealthy man named Micah and a traveling Levite. On a tribal level, it is demonstrated through the cowardice and thieving of the people of Dan.

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Key Points: Worldly success can at times lead us to assume that our choices in life are honoring to the Lord.

The possibility of financial gain is often how we are tempted to compromise the truth.

II. Having failed to conquer the land allotted to them, people from the tribe of Dan set out to find another place to establish themselves. (18:1-10)

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- (4) The Danite spies then returned and told their brethren that the land was theirs for the taking.
 ⇒ The story is in many ways a **perverse** version of the original spying out of the land of Canaan.

Key Point: Disobedience is often easier than trusting the Lord and following His commands.

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- (1) The Danite force surrounded Micah's property in order to **steal** his cultic objects.
- (2) The Danites added **bribery** to their sin of theft.
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- (3) The Levite's corruption is shown in his willingness to enable idolatry on a **tribal** and not merely household level.
"He took the ephod and the household gods and the carved image and went along with the people."
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 ⇒ Rather than bringing blessing to the Danites, the idols became a source of ongoing **apostasy**.
"There is...foreshadowing...of the future shrines set up at Bethel and Dan by Jeroboam I in competition with Jerusalem after the division of the kingdom. The roots of...apostasy penetrate deep into Israel's history." —Boda & Conway

Key Point: The disregard for God's Word often has consequences that arise in the long term.

Individual:

Communal:

Assessing the First Conclusion

- The accounts of Micah and the Danites demonstrate the **paganization** of Israel on an individual and tribal level.
"Rather than following the law and submitting to the care and guidance of YHWH, both Micah and the Danites attempt to seize control of their own fates, Micah by establishing a shrine with a priest by which to ensure—or coerce—YHWH's blessing, and the Danites by locating and procuring land that is much easier for them to subjugate than their allotted inheritance."—B&C
- The account of the Levite demonstrates the **character failings** of the religious leadership in Israel.

Applying the Text

- The NT authors also **warn** us of the dangers of ignorance and unbelief.
Heb. 2:1-4—¹ Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, ⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.