

## Judges 17:1-13 – Ignorance in the Ranks

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: None of the judges measured up to what Israel needed. So Israel sank further into social, religious, and moral corruption. Israel truly needed Messiah. In today's sermon you will see the failure of another leader in Israel. His name was Micah. But Micah's failure was not one caused by rebellion, but one caused by ignorance.

Our headings are:

Misplaced Zeal 热忱

Misplaced Truth

Our goals are: That you will learn to stop serving God in a way that might seem right to you, knowing that because you belong to Jesus, you must work in a way that he prescribes 规定

### Misplaced Zeal

1 Now there was a man from the mountains of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. 2 And he said to his mother, "The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from you, and on which you put a curse, even saying it in my ears—here is the silver with me; I took it." And his mother said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, my son!"

#### 1. Micah was not a judge per se, but he was a leader from the mountains of Ephraim, the brother tribe of Manasseh.

Micah means "who is like God." It is a short form for Micaiah or Michael.

#### 2. What do we know about Micah?

a. He was a grown man with grown children.

b. He stole a lot of money from his mother. He was wicked. Who would steal from his own mother? Stealing from one's mother is worse than stealing from a stranger because one should love one's mother more. What is ironic about this situation is that his mother, who would have been old by now, would likely have left the money to him when she died. She should have been able to trust him. What a poor example Micah set for his children!

c. Upon hearing of the curse his mother proclaimed on the thief, Micah returned the silver. We don't know if he was genuinely sorry for his theft, or if he was afraid the curse of his mother might come upon him. But we know it was a curse he did not want. He knew God hears the cries of a parent. Remember how Noah cursed Ham?

Genesis 9:25 Then he said: "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brethren."

Proverbs 28:24 Whoever robs his father or his mother, And says, "*It is no transgression* 罪," The same is companion to a destroyer.

#### 3. Micah's mother rejoiced that her son returned the money and asked for Jehovah to bless her son. The fact that she asked Jehovah to bless Micah showed that there was still a form of religion in Israel. She knew of Covenant God. What was missing was the fact that he should have paid a penalty of 20%. But ignorance was ruling at the time.

Numbers 5:6... 'When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit in unfaithfulness against the LORD, and that person is guilty, 7 'then he shall confess the sin which he has committed. He shall make restitution for his trespass in full, plus one-fifth of it, and give it to the one he has wronged.

3 So when he had returned the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, "I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son, to make a carved image and a molded 铸 image; now therefore, I will return it to you." 4 Thus he returned the silver to his mother. Then his mother took two hundred shekels of silver and gave them to the silversmith, and he made it into a carved image and a molded image; and they were in the house of Micah.

#### 4. Now Micah's mother said that she had dedicated all 1100 shekels of silver to Jehovah. So to keep her vow, she ordered a molded and a carved image of Jehovah with about 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the silver. The carved image was usually made from wood and the molded image was made from melted metal. This was great wickedness against the 2<sup>nd</sup> law – to worship the true God by means of carved and molded images! She did not intentionally plan wickedness, but she was surely ignorant of what God wanted. In fact, it looked quite like she had zeal for Jehovah.

5 The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated 分派 one of his sons, who became his priest.

#### 5. Picking up on the zeal of his mother:

a. Micah then made a shrine (translated "shrine" but literally means "house of god"). This was like a private

chapel 礼拜堂

**b. He made an ephod.** The ephod was the clothing worn by the priest. On it he would carry 12 stones representing all the people of God to God. It was as if the priest were carrying the weight of the people of God.

**c. He made other household gods.** These were probably little replicas of the idol he made for other people.

**d. Micah made his son a priest. He was not from the tribe of Levi.** (BTW, see why you need to know the different tribes?) Micah was imitating true worship with zeal. But look at what God said earlier!

**Exodus 29:9** "And you shall gird them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and put the hats on them. **The priesthood shall be theirs for a perpetual statute.** So you shall consecrate Aaron and his sons.

So Micah had no right to do so. He was usurping 篡夺 the authority of the church. Look at what he really deserved!

**Numbers 3:10** "So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall attend to their priesthood; **but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.**"

**Hebrews 5:4** And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

6 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

**6. Yes, it was blind zeal 盲目的热情. But that was characteristic of the time: Everyone did whatever he wanted** – even in the worship of Jehovah God. There was no church discipline.

### 7. Lessons:

**a. Learn to be contented with what you have.** If but if you do steal, make restitution 归还 because you fear the Lord.

**b. Don't ignore the curse of a mother or father.** Be afraid of them. God has placed people over you and when they pray for something to happen, it could. Parents don't have the same level of pronouncements of the Patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but God hears their prayers in a special way.

**c. Think how many churches today are run by self-appointed leaders and worship the way they want.** Think how many churches have appointed women elders and ministers. Think of how many churches have changed the elements of worship. They may have done it with good intentions. **They may have done it with zeal for the Lord. But zeal without knowledge is like heart surgery with a chain saw.** God does not accept zeal as a substitute for truth. The church can expect God's deep anger and strong judgment for this.

**d. Do you see how kingdom work can be affected when there is no proper instruction and discipline in the home and in the church?** People then have a license to live however they want! We need knowledgeable Christians.

**1Peter 1:18** knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like silver or gold*, from **your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,**

## Misplaced Truth

7 Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah; he was a Levite, and was staying there.

**1. Now there was a young Levite who was living in Judah.** (All priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests. Some Levites were assistants to the priests in all matters of worship. They gathered wood for sacrifices, etc. And they lived throughout Israel.) See Numbers 4.

8 The man departed from the city of **Bethlehem in Judah** to stay wherever he could find a place.

Then **he came to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah,** as he journeyed. 9 And Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?" So he said to him, "I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am on my way to find a place to stay."

**2. The young Levite left Judah, probably because of a lack of employment.** Surely it was a time of religious decline in Israel so there was little support for worship of God. (This happened in Nehemiah's time. Nehemiah 13:10.) How sad that this was true in the tribe from which Jesus would come-Judah. This young man seemed quite industrious 勤劳 and was looking for a place to work.

**3. The young Levite stopped at the house of Micah.** Micah was a leader, so it was not strange that he would go there.

10 Micah said to him, "Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten shekels of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance." So the Levite went in.

**4. After they became acquainted, Micah invited the young Levite to be a priest and work out of his house.** He offered him **10 shekels of silver per year**, and sweetened the deal with a **new set of clothes** (along with **priestly clothes-the ephod**) and **food and housing**. Priestly clothes would have given the Levite a **sense of importance** since he was only **an assistant to the priests**. So he accepted the job and the conditions. (Maybe he was tired of traveling and wanted an easier life.) **He was a hireling 雇工 who was willing to do the master's bidding.** I just saw a former minister in a

Reformed church boasting **about his wife and children were leading in worship** now that they have left the Reformed church. Surely it wasn't the faithfulness to doctrine that pulled him to that church. Incentives? Maybe. Isn't it interesting that **Micah simply replaced his son as priest**. He felt he had the power to do so! And isn't it interesting that **he spent 200 shekels on idols, but 10 on a year's pay for the priest**? God's worship never required expensive elements! Even stones for the altar were naturally occurring stones.

11 Then the **Levite was content to dwell with the man**; and the young man became like one of his sons to him. 12 So **Micah consecrated the Levite**, and the young man became his priest, and lived in the house of Micah.

**5. Micah had good intentions, but was ignorant. He had no authority to ordain anyone to office**, but he did it anyway. He probably thought: "We don't have anyone to do it, so I will." The church does the same thing today: "We don't have men to lead, so we will make women ministers." "Some people are offended by some of the Psalms, so we will substitute them with popular songs." There was not consideration for "thus says the Lord." The Levite was more knowledgeable for sure, but he was pragmatic. He **knew that priests were consecrated to office by other priests**, but he saw his need.

13 Then Micah said, "**Now I know that the LORD will be good** to me, since I have a Levite as priest!"

**6. Then ignorance became clearer**. Micah thought what he did was great. He thought that worship caused prosperity. He bought in to Benny Hinn, Joel Osteen, and Creflo Dollar. He thought the Levite was his magic charm. **But God is good to you only because you have been redeemed by Jesus**; God is not good to you because you are good to him. Even your best work is only rewarded because of God's grace.

## **7. Lessons:**

- a. When orthodoxy 正统 is abandoned people will go searching – especially the young**. And they usually fall into trouble! They end up in churches that offer no real improvement. It is important that churches keep worship faithful.
- b. Follow God's rules about how a church must be run**. Many churches in China are led by women because there are enough men, and this trend is continuing in North America. This is pragmatism. Fix the problem of why we don't have enough men in leadership rather than adjust God's words to suit the times.
- c. On issues of morality, you must never trust your own heart; trust the Word of God**. Don't believe in yourself; believe in the Word of God. Don't do what your gut tells you. Your "gut" will work in a self-preserving manner. Do what God tells you. When in doubt, ask: "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Example: Because women seem able to preach, don't let pragmatism 实用主义 take over. If God drops money from a plane on your bed (providence), does that make it your money? No. God's Word directs you in truth.
- d. Roman Catholics and some protestant churches spend so much on cathedrals and buildings that they have little to invest in true teaching and kingdom work!** So watch how you invest the Lord's money.
- e. Don't use good works as lucky charms to get what you want**. Worship and serve God because you have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

## **Conclusion:**

Micah, his mother, and the Levite showed a misplaced zeal for what to believe and how to live – especially in the area of worship. They wanted to worship Jehovah God, but they chose to worship him, not according to his revealed will, but according to their active imaginations. The motive was good. The manner was wrong.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

**1. Be ready to justify what you believe and how you live from the Word of God**. Don't be contented with marking time, showing up regularly for worship, repeat a few expressions of your faith, and even appear zealous. If you do this, your children will be directionless as they get older.

**2. This means you have to study the Word of God and regularly evaluate what you see and hear**. If it is inconsistent with the Word of God, you have to reject it out-rightly! And then teach this to your children.

**3. What's your motivation 动机 to do this: You belong to Christ, body and soul – in life and in death**. You were redeemed by him as your priest. You were taught by him as your prophet. You are secured by him as your king. Live how he wants you to live. Learn how he wants you to learn. Love how he wants you to love.

Finally, no one can dare come into the presence of God, and you are required to, unless you come with the blood of Jesus Christ in your hands. May you ask God to make you worthy of coming into his presence by counting Christ's blood as yours!