

Judges 18 – The Epidemic of Ignorance Begins

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Handfuls, JFB, Poole, Trapp, Geneva, Barnes, Clarke, Delitzsch, Henry, INT, Gill, Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: In winter there is a constant concern about the spread of communicable respiratory diseases 传染性呼吸道疾病. So you are trained to wash your hands, build up your immunity, and cough in your elbow. But there is another kind of disease that is far more contagious than the flu. I will call this disease ignoritis veritas – ignorance of truth! In our passage today you will see how ignorance 无知, because it remained unchecked, not only took over Micah's house, but it also started to spread to the tribe of Dan.

Our headings are:

The Fact of Ignorance

The Act of Ignorance

Our goals are: **That as the redeemed children of God through Jesus, you will learn to depend on God's Word for what you believe and how you live.**

The Fact of Ignorance

1 In those days **there was no king in Israel**. And in those days the tribe of the **Danites was seeking an inheritance** for itself to dwell in; for until that day their inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen to them.

1. There was no king in Israel so there was no order in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. No one was held accountable for sins. You can compare this to a church where there is no discipline whatsoever. The law of God was brushed aside. **Instead of God, ignorance was king instead**. This is the theme of Judges.

2. The Danites, who were assigned land in the westernmost and the northernmost part of Israel, had not fully taken their land, even lost some land that they had captured. They were separated from nearby tribes by mountains. The other tribes did not help Dan, as they should have, to gain their land and keep the land. No king and no kinsman came to help. **No one gave advice; knowledge was scarce**. The priests and prophets were absent. Israel was either lazy or did not care about the Danites. Whether it was laziness or not caring, the results were the same.

2 So the children of **Dan sent five men of their family** from their territory, **men of valor** 勇气 from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and search it. They said to them, "Go, search the land." So they went to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there.

3. Feeling abandoned, the Danites then took matters into their own hands – which is always a recipe 食谱 for disaster.

The Danites sent out five brave (chayil) men to see how they could solve their problems by themselves. (Dan was cursed by Jacob with being serpent-like and sneaky 偷偷摸摸. (Genesis 49:17) These 5 men went to spy to see what land they could conquer. **The idea of taking matters into one's own hand is not strange** – but always dangerous. Isn't this what happened to King Saul later?

1 Samuel 13:8 Then **he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel**. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. 9 So Saul said, "Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me." And he offered the burnt offering. 13 And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly..."

It was regrettable Samuel did not come on time, but **it was also regrettable that Saul thought it was okay to take matters into his own hands**. Ignorance was deadly and destructive to Saul.

4. These 5 men, in their search for land to conquer, came to Ephraim where the unelected young Levite was serving Micah and his family as their priest. They were desperate for help. They had no idea of what to do, no clear instructions, so they listened to the lying Levite who was only too willing to speak.

3 While they were at the house of Micah, they **recognized the voice of the young Levite**. They turned aside and said to him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What do you have here?"

5. The five Danites questioned the young Levite about his work. After listening **to what he said, not to his accent**, they assumed he was a priest. He would have known many things about the law. He sounded legitimate 合理. So they asked him a number of questions – but not the right ones! **You know if you like someone you don't pressure them too much – like a reporter who refused to ask Hillary Clinton, who is running to be president of the US, about all the scandals surrounding her, choosing to ask her what her favorite ice-cream flavor was.** Surely they did not enjoy

traveling in uncomfortable situations, sleeping in the open, being away from their families, and eating whatever they could kill. **So they were willing to believe anything reasonable.**

Look at their questions: Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What do you have here?

They should have asked: How and when were you ordained to serve as priest of God? Who supervises what you do? How come you are using idols to worship God? Why are you being paid by private sources? How can a non-priest hire a priest? How is your church run? What is your relationship with the Ark of the Covenant in Shiloh.

But the 5 men were looking for their personal benefit rather for the glory of God. This was deliberate ignorance.

4 He said to them, "Thus and so Micah did for me. **He has hired me,** and I **have become his priest.**"

6. The Levite then explained all that Micah did for him. He should have been ashamed to say that Micah hired him and made him a priest. In ignorance, he thought what he did was fine, even usurping the authority of the priest.

5 So they said to him, "Please **inquire of God**, that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous繁荣."

7. Because of their ignorance, the 5 Danites then asked the Levite if God (Elohim) would bless their journey and if they would be prosperous. (They seem ignorant of God's covenant name.) They convinced themselves that he was the right man and then they took advice from him, because after all, he sounded good. The blind was leading the blind.

6 And the priest said to them, "Go in peace. The **presence of the LORD** be with you on your way."

8. The Levite told them that they would be successful and that God (Jehovah) would prosper their way. (He used Jehovah to add legitimacy to his words.) He was like the lying prophets speaking to the king of Israel—and led him to his death. 1Kings 22:12 And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver *it* into the king's hand."

9. Lessons:

a. Do you ignore your brothers and sisters who are on the fringe 边缘? Maybe they don't seem to fit in so you don't invite them to your home. Or maybe you were excited when they joined the church, but then "life happens" and you ignore them. **But no one in the church must ever be unloved.** If anyone is unloved, you are guilty. And keep in mind that these fringe brothers and sisters may be in other churches!!!

b. God always takes care of his children, but there is no such assurance to those who have no regard for him. Psalms 34:15 The eyes of the LORD *are* on the righteous, And His ears *are open* to their cry.

As a Christian, the Lord will bless your going out and your coming in, but the ungodly will be bitten by the serpent 蛇. But you must stay close to him.

c. Not everyone who uses the name of God is a servant of God. Learn to decipher 解码 false teaching and false teachers. Some people sound sound, but they are not. If you don't learn to decipher truth, you are likely to be misled. It doesn't matter if many people like a man or not. If what comes from his mouth is a lie, reject him. And don't fall for people who tell you what you like, or what you want to believe. Let him support what he says from the Word.

d. Beware of self-appointed leaders and pastors. Pragmatism (we can't get anyone so we will change our standards) and ignorance will not pass God's test.

The Act of Ignorance

7 So the five men **departed and went to Laish.** They **saw the people who were there, how they dwelt safely**, in the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure. **There were no rulers in the land who might put them to shame** for anything. They were far from the Sidonians, and they had no ties with anyone.

1. Happy with the news that God would bless their spying mission, untrue though it was, the Danites proceeded to Laish (or Leshem). They walked for 5 days – 170km - in the hot, **inhospitable conditions based on untruths.** There they saw that Laish was good. It was extremely fertile. It was secured in a valley. There were no rulers to organize for war against Dan if they attacked. And Laish had no alliances to help them.

Joshua 19:47 And the border of the children of Dan went beyond these, because the children of **Dan went up to fight against Leshem and took it;** and they struck it with the edge of the sword, took possession of it, and dwelt in it. **They called Leshem, Dan,** after the name of Dan their father.

In the minds of the 5 spies, this was the ideal place to attack. Their action was colored by their ignorance. Keep in mind that while the Danites were ignorant of God's law, yet you see the wickedness of the Laishites. They had no fear of God but indulged 沉迷 themselves in their own prosperity.

8 Then the spies **came back to their brethren at Zorah and Eshtaol**, and their brethren said to them, "What is your report?"

2. So the five spies returned and reported to their brothers in Dan what they were promised and what they saw.

9 So they said, "**Arise, let us go up against them**. For we have seen the land, and indeed it is very good. Would you do nothing? Do not hesitate to go, and enter to possess the land. 10 "When you go, you will come to a secure people and a large land. **For God has given it into your hands**, a place where there is no lack of anything that is on the earth."

3. Then they urged their fellow Danites to attack the land, confident that the rich land was theirs. **Their ignorance caused them to urge actions**...but they were the wrong actions. (Think of what global warming alarmists have done!)

11 And six hundred men of the family of the Danites went from there, from Zorah and Eshtaol, **armed with weapons of war**. 12 Then they went up and encamped in Kirjath Jearim in Judah. (Therefore they call that place **Mahaneh Dan** to this day. There it is, west of Kirjath Jearim.) 13 And they passed from there to the mountains of Ephraim, and **came to the house of Micah**.

4. So the 600 prepared an attack against the land. Before they did, they came back to Micah's house. **Do you see how the ignorance started to spread?** Micah misled the Levite. The Levite misled the 5. The five misled 600 soldiers (and surely their families as well) to get ready, based on ignorance, to go and take over the some people's land.

5. Lessons:

a. You have no ground for acting unless God's Word authorizes you by clear prescription or by clear imitable 模仿example. Those who look for signs in the sky will shame their Savior who has done his work as prophet. Those who pick only what they want to hear must prepare for their own frustration 挫折. **God's Word is absolute for you**. **Deuteronomy 13:1** "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 "and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, `Let us go after other gods' --which you have not known--`and let us serve them,' 3 "you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

b. This means you have to search the Scriptures. Question what the best preachers say, like the church in Berea. **Acts 17:11** These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Conclusion:

The five Danite spies were ignorant of the law of God – laws concerning worship in particular. So they were deceived into accepting what this young ignorant priest said to them. He sounded good and probably had some good theological words! Maybe he prayed well. Believing what was not true, the 5 men of Dan then spread ignorance to the whole tribe of Dan.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Don't ignore the duties you have to each other. It might be complicated to help. It might cost you. You might have other things to do. But helping each other is evidence of love. "They will know you are Christians by your love." And there are mutual benefits that come from common interests in the kingdom. For example, one plant, one waters.

2. Be aware that there are many who use right sounding words. They may be famous and they may be well-liked, but if what they speak is not consistent with the Word of God, reject them. Yes, take the time to examine carefully what they say, but if is untrue, having nothing to do with them. Don't follow the crowd when it comes to popular preaching.

3. Why care for others...why be careful about nice-sounding preachers...because you belong to Jesus, redeemed by his blood, and you therefore must live to please him.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, what you need to know the most is that Jesus Christ lived and died for sinners. Unless you accept in your heart that he died on the cross for you, and unless you offer to God the work of Jesus Christ for you, you will die in your sins. Ignorance of the truth is no excuse with God.