

Mica and the False Prophet

Revival

By Tom Hill

Bible Text: Judges 17:1-13

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As we have looked over these past weeks in the book of Judges we have concentrated primarily upon the judges that God has provided on behalf of his people to bring them relief from their oppressors. They suffered oppression because of their sin. But God would bring periodically a judge who would overcome the enemy, bring relief and freedom to the children of Israel as they lived in the Promised Land.

But the book of Judges doesn't end with the last judge. The last judge was Samson. We looked at him recently, but the book of Judges doesn't end with the last judge. It is an interesting book. It goes on to describe some events that transpired during that era of the judges. We don't know exactly when during that time period they occurred, but it gives us a glimpse and an understanding of the depth of the sin of the children of Israel during the time of the judges.

This morning we will look at Judges chapter 17. It describes for us a very interesting series of events that took place during the time of the judges and gives us a glimpse, a real picture into the wickedness into which the children of Israel had fallen because of their refusal to obey God.

Take the sheet I gave you. It has the verses on it. We will look at the first few verses and then we will proceed down through the chapter. Judges 17. We will start and read the first five verses.

“There was a man of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. And he said to his mother, ‘The 1,100 pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse, and also spoke it in my ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it.’”¹

Ah, his conscience began to bother him a little bit when he heard momma getting all upset and placing a curse upon who ever stole her money. I took it.

¹ Judges 17:1-2.

And his mother said, “Blessed be my son by the LORD.” And he restored the 1,100 pieces of silver to his mother. And his mother said, “I dedicate the silver to the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a carved image and a metal image. Now therefore I will restore it to you.”

So when he restored the money to his mother, his mother took 200 pieces of silver and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into a carved image and a metal image. And it was in the house of Micah. And the man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and household gods, and ordained one of his sons, who became his priest.²

Hard to believe, isn't it? The children of Israel had fallen to such depths that a man by the name of Micah, first of all, stole from his mother 1100 pieces of silver, a tidy sum of money. In any day if you talk about 1100 pieces of silver in our day it would be worth thousands of dollars.

In that day, I don't know the economy of that day, but 1100 pieces of silver indicated a large sum of money.

When heard the cures of his mother he decided he had better fess up and give her her money back or dire consequences might come upon him. So he gave her the money back and in gratefulness she said, “Oh, I will give it back to you, but I will give it back to you in the form of an idol.”

Well, after she thought about it a while she decided not to use the whole 1100 pieces. She gave him 200 pieces to make an idol.

We can't tell exactly from the Scripture whether she commissioned the silversmith to make two images or whether it was one image that was covered with a metal like silver or gold, it is kind of hard to tell whether it was two images or two in one so to speak. But she commissioned the construction of an idol, a false god and gave it to her son Micah.

Micah took the idol and placed it in his home and notice what it says. His home had become a shrine. It was filled with idols, not only the one that his mother just recently had made for him, but he had also made an ephod which is a fancy coat piece and it says household gods. The household gods represented images that people made in the likeness of their family members who had died. And they would worship the images of their loved ones who had died and would go to those images and seek from them wisdom and direction from them supposing that those images had some connection with their loved one who had died some time previously and would go to them for direction.

Why would God wan this written? Why would he urge the writer of this book to include these events? He wanted his people to know the depth of their sin and the wickedness and what occurs in the life of an individual when they abandon God and turn aside from him, the wickedness that envelopes their lives.

² Judges 17:2-5.

When God created Adam and Eve he created them perfectly. But when they sinned they abandoned God and turned from him. They became the forbearers of all of us. We all, in some respect, can trace our lineage back to Adam and Eve.

I know genealogy has become a popular practice in our day where people like to look up their family histories. Well, if you trace it back far enough you would come to Adam and Eve. And the sin that enveloped their lives because of their disobedience passed down through all of their offspring. In their image they were birthed and born. And we see exhibited here in the life of Micah and his mother the depth of their sin, because they abandoned and turned from God.

This description also fits our day as well. For the conditions that we read here in these first few verses describe conditions in our world today. The man Micah had many gods that he worshipped. In our day we have a term for that. We call it Pluralism. And we think we have coined a new phrase. Pluralism is as old as the Garden of Eden. And here we see it in the life of Micah and his family. They had many gods. Pluralism, very simply says no one god describes and provides all of the meaning for life. You must have multiple expressions of life in order to obtain its fullness and understanding of life. That defines Pluralism. Micah was a Pluralist. He had many gods. He didn't think one was enough. And, furthermore, he didn't include the God who created all things in that mix. He had idols of all different sorts and varieties, but he did not include the creator God. Of course, you can't just mix the creator God in with all of the other gods and say, "Well, I will satisfy that god and I will satisfy this god. Oh, yes, I will satisfy the God who created all things...."

No. God is not one of many gods. He is God. There is no other God beside him. He alone is God. And so this series of events that we read from Judges describes our day, because our day today is marked by Pluralism, many gods, many gods. Choose the one that you want to believe and just have faith.

And recently I heard a very popular radio commentator. You might have heard of him maybe you even listen to his program from time to time a man by the name of Glen Beck. And he made the comment, "It doesn't matter which god you..." He said, "Just pray to your god and if everybody will just pray to their god everything will turn out ok."

No, my friends, there are not many gods. There is one God, the creator and sustainer of all things, the one who created all things visible and invisible. And that God had revealed himself to the children of Israel in many dramatic ways. And they turned aside from him just like our world today has turned aside from him.

We see another aspect of that day that describes our day as well. It is called Spiritualism. You notice, I explained about the household gods and how through those idols of the household gods they felt they had contact with the dead person that it represented and that somehow that dead person would communicate through the idol to them wisdom and understanding for decisions that they needed to make.

In our day today we have a great significant emphasis upon Spiritualism. I will just mention a few in case you didn't know they were Spiritualism. For example, tarot cards, séances. We go to people with the magic ball. We go to palmistry where people will read the lines on your palm and tell you about your life. And we have all kinds of mediums and other systems of trying to contact the dead as though the dead could provide direction for the living. Spiritualism has become very prominent in our day just like under the time of Micah.

My dear friends, your dead loved ones cannot communicate with you through anyone. They are gone. They are dead. And you cannot contact their spirit by some medium or go between or some image or idol or some process that someone comes to you and says, "Would you like to have contact with your loved one? I can provide that for you."

Well, they can't. No, they can't. There is a barrier. There is a gulf that is fixed. There is no communication between the dead and the living. Very popular in our day. And we can learn from the sad example that we see from Micah and his family, the depth of their sin and the wickedness, because they abandoned God and they forgot to follow and worship him and him alone. And he would provide all that they need.

Well, we move in our account and we read a very sad description in verse number six that says:

"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."³

Everybody did what seemed right to them. It didn't matter what you thought. It is what I think. It didn't matter if it impinged upon someone else. It is what I wanted to do. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes. No standard of morality. No moral compass. No spiritual direction for the children of Israel. Not even a physical leader, not a king, not a judge, not anyone during this time period described in the life of Micah and his family. There was no king not even a bad king, no one. They just did what they thought was the right thing to do in their own mind that... What is the phrase we use in our day? Que, sera, sera. That is probably a poor pronunciation of the French, but what will be, will be and I will just go on, do what is right in my own eyes.

The writer of this book in including these events at the end of the book describes for us the depth of their sin and their wickedness. Not only had they rejected God, but they rejected everybody else, too. And they stood on their own two feet and only did what they thought was right, right in my own eyes.

It describes the necessity of a savior. The writer of this book, by describing and including these horrific events, describing the wickedness and sinfulness of Israel wanted the people to realize their need of help. They need a Savior. They need someone who would

³ Judges 17:6.

come and provide for them that which they could not do on their own. It describes our day to a T.

We live in a very relativistic time period. That is the theological term describing this kind of thought pattern. Everybody did what was right in their own eyes. In our day and age we use it by the phrase if it feels good, do it. If it feels good, do it. I find that kind of confusing because what if what feels good to me would be disaster to you? For example, what if it felt good to me to murder your child? I would get a thrill out of that. It would be disaster to the one I killed and be a disaster to your family. And is that somehow morally right? That doesn't even make sense, does it?

Yet there are many today who live by that dictum. If it feels good, do it.

Situational ethics. What is right or wrong is determined by the person, the place and the time, the events and what is going on and might even be right for you to do wrong. It depends.

Relativism. Every man did what was right in his own eyes. If it felt good he did it. No regard whatsoever for God and God's plan and purpose for mankind.

Do you see the intent of the author how he wants us to see the desperate need of a Savior? The necessity of someone who could come along and provide relief for the inherent depravity and wickedness of our own minds and hearts?

Well, we come to one last section in this passage. It describes something equally intriguing and unusual beginning in verse number seven.

Now there was a young man of Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. And the man departed from the town of Bethlehem in Judah to sojourn where he could find a place. And as he journeyed, he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah. And Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?"

And he said to him, "I am a Levite of Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to sojourn where I may find a place."

And Micah said to him, "Stay with me, and be to me a father and a priest, and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year and a suit of clothes and your living." And the Levite went in.

And the Levite was content to dwell with the man, and the young man became to him like one of his sons. And Micah ordained the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.

Then Micah said, “Now I know that the LORD will prosper me, because I have a Levite as priest.”⁴

Now we take a look at an unnamed man, a Levite journeying from the city of Bethlehem to the south of Jerusalem, heading to the north country and he arrives at the home of Micah.

First just a word about the Levite. Who were the Levites? They were the children of Levi. Back in the time of the Moses Levi had a number of children including Aaron, Gershon and others. God chose Aaron to be the line of the priests. All of the offspring, the male offspring from Aaron’s line would become priests and high priests in the temple. All of the other children from the family or the tribe of Levi would become workers in the tabernacle. They would assist the priests. And when the tabernacle would travel from the wilderness, from place to place and then into the Promised Land as the children of Israel traveled, the Levites carried it. The Levites took it down, carried it, transported it and erected it again in the new place.

So they had a function in the temple, just not that of a priest. And God had ordained that in his economy in the land of Promise, where he sent them and gave them, all of the tribes of Israel would have a plot of land, a section of land that would belong to their tribe, except the children of Levi. They would not have an inheritance in the land. Their inheritance would come from the gifts and the offerings of all of the other people of the children of Israel. And they would give to the temple every year and God prescribed how they would give and those things that came into the temple they would disburse among all of the children of Levi and that would provide for their sustenance and of their living. So, in essence, a Levite could live in a variety of places throughout the land. This Levite decided he didn’t want to live in Bethlehem anymore. He decided he wanted to move north. So he headed to Ephraim.

I find it rather descriptive of the character of this Levite that he felt at home in the house of an idol worshipper. Doesn’t that tell you something about this man? This man who should have wanted to work in the temple serving God and assisting the priest, left that to become a priest which God had not ordained him to become, but he became a priest in a home that had become a shrine of a multitude of idols. God nowhere present. It tells me a lot about that Levite.

And this man tried to make a god out of many gods. He became a priest in the house of Micah, attempting to meld together, to merger together all of the gods into a God that people could worship. In our day and age it is called Syncretism. It describes the taking the parts of many things, bringing them together into one and worshipping that, a composite god, if you will, a god compromised of the best of all of the religions about us. And we draw a bit from this religion and a little bit from this religion and a little bit from this religion and we bring it all together and, oh, we don’t want to throw out the Bible and the Bible has got a lot of good things in it so we will take a few things out of the Bible, too, along with things from other religions and we will bring it together and we have a

⁴ Judges 17:7-13.

God of our own making. Syncretism, present in the era of the judges, put together by this Levite in the house of Micah.

Oh, what a sad condition of the children of Israel. How they had fallen so deeply into sin to include even a Levite, one born to work in the temple and tabernacle of God leaving that behind, despising the living God, finding himself at home in a house filled with idols. Oh what a depth of their sin, how desperately the writer of Judges wanted the children of Israel to see their need of a Savior.

And God had promised them one. And God had even provided for them great leaders: Moses, Joshua and judges even in the midst of these sinful times. He provided for them judges to help them. And they continuously abandoned God to practice idolatry.

God has provided for us a Savior, Jesus Christ, his Son. We don't need a house full of gods. We don't need a special idol made out of silver and gold. We don't need many gods from which to choose. We don't need to try and take parts of the good from all of the different religions and come up with a god that we design of our own that satisfies our thoughts and our desires for a god that we would want to worship. No, the God who created all things and sustains all things by the word of his power has revealed himself to us. He has revealed himself to us in creation. He has revealed himself to us in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And, further, he has revealed himself in his Word that we have, that we can read and study. And he has revealed himself in there that we can know him and we worship him I all of his fullness that he has revealed to us.

The Lord Jesus has presented himself to all who will believe. He said, "Whoever will believe I will give to them eternal life. Whoever comes to me I will in no wise cast out. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Jesus the Savior, the promised one that God had revealed throughout Old Testament times and had shown to them their need of someone like Jesus. He provided in the fullness of time. And we know this man Jesus. We know about him. But do you know him personally? Have you trusted him personally as the true and the living God as he has revealed himself to us? He has promised that all who come to him in faith he will give to them eternal life. Do you have that eternal life? Do you know the reality of his presence in your life by the Holy Spirit? You can. You can know that. All you need to do is call upon him in faith and trust.

The Bible tells us whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. And so I ask you this morning as I would contemplate the events described for us in our study today. Have you found yourself trying to pull together a God of your own making? A little of this and a little of that and a little of this and a little of that? Or perhaps you have taken the approach of some of these people. I will do it my way. I will do what is right in my own eyes.

Oh, I would urge you today to trust the provision that God has made, whom he promised would come, Jesus Christ the Savior. Trust him today. Call upon him and find his promises true. He alone is sufficient. He will change your life.

I pray that the Spirit of God today will take these truths from centuries past and open your eyes to see how they describe our times today and our need of a Savior who will redeem us from our sin, who will reconcile us back to God, who will restore us back into the image of God which he designed us to become.

Well, because we have become in our time to copy the event as described in Judges chapter 17, therefore we must—you and I must—trust God's provision for people like us, Jesus Christ who can redeem us, can restore us, can reconcile us back to God and can revive us within to become the people that he called us to become.

I pray that you will find that your experience today.

Let's close in prayer.