

Micah The Thief

Revival

By Tom Hill

Bible Text: Judges 17:1-5

Preached on: Sunday, November 18, 2012

Master Ministries International, Inc.

3581 Knollview Ct SE, #305

Grand Rapids, MI 49546-5923

Website: www.masterministries.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/masterministries

We have looked, over the last several weeks, at the book of Judges. The book of Judges covers a lengthy period in the history of Israel. Primarily it covers either a tribe or two of the nation or the whole nation as a whole and it describes their sinfulness and their wickedness because they failed to follow God.

At the end of the book we encounter three different narratives of individuals. They give us a wider glimpse into the times of the judges and how the people lived during those days. We have looked at kind of a broad picture of Israel. Now we will take a look at some specific people living during that time period. They had come out of Egypt with a strong and mighty arm of God delivering them. They came through the wilderness. God brought them into the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. They defeated many of the foes and enemies in the land and then Joshua died. After he died they had no leader. And they turned aside into sin and abandoned God. That gives the broad picture of the book of Judges.

God in his grace and mercy during that time would raise up a judge from time to time who would deliver them from their enemies. And during the lifetime of that judge they would experience relief from oppression. In time, of course, the judge would die. Israel would revert right back to their sinful ways that they had practiced prior to God's providing the judge for them.

That, in broad picture, describes the book of Judges. I want us to take a look at one the narratives, one of the stories at the end of the book. Now a few weeks ago we looked at this story of the Man Micah and we looked at it in a broad picture. I want us to take a closer look at this man and see what we can learn from his experiences during the time of Judges and what God teaches us there from his life.

You have in front of you the printout of the verses. Some of them we will look at today. Others we will use in the future. But let's take a look at the first five verses from Judges chapter 17, because it describes for us the setting of Micah and his family.

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.” 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.¹

As we look at these series of events described for us in the verses we just read of the man Micah, a very simple series of events. His mother had a sum of money. He stole it. He took it for himself. She uttered a curse upon whoever stole that money and she spoke it loud enough, at least in the hearing of Micah so that he would hear it.

Now maybe she had a hunch that he might have had something to do with its disappearance. We don't know, but nonetheless, he heard the curse. And frightened of its consequences upon his life he confessed that he had stolen the money.

“I took it, mother. I will give it back to you.”

He returned it back to his mother.

In gratefulness for the recovering of her money she pronounces a blessing upon him that is generally quite mixed. She gives praise and thanks for her son, gives thanks to God for her son and then adds to it and in gratefulness for what he has done for me I am going to give him two idols, which just runs absolutely contrary to the blessing that she had just invoked on his behalf. She took 200 pieces of silver, gave it to the local silversmith and said, “I want two idols made out of this silver that I have given to you.”

Manufactured two different idols, gave them to Micah for his house. He had set up a shrine in his home. And in the shrine he had an ephod, he had these two idols that his mother gave him and he had household gods in his shrine. And then, in order to make his religion complete, he ordained his son as a priest.

That describes the events I want us to look at, for they provide for us an insight into the character of Micah. It would seem, at first glance, that these stories at the end of the book of Judges come chronologically after the life of Samson, the last judge. Judges 16 describes for us the end of Samson's life. Then we come to Judges 17 and the beginning of the story of Micah. However, these stories that begin in chapter 17 with Micah do not come chronologically in real time after Samson. They actually occur in chapter one and chapter two of the book of Judges.

Now we looked at chapter one and chapter two several weeks ago. So it may have

¹ Judges 17:1-5.

slipped your mind as to what occurred during that time period, so I will just briefly remind you of what took place during that time. Joshua died. They had no leader. The children of Israel gathered together and they called out unto God and said, “What do we do? Joshua has died. We don’t have a leader. What shall we do?”

And God gave them instruction. The tribe of Judah will lead you into battle against your enemies and you will have success. And they listened to God’s encouragement and they followed his counsel until they came against the enemies who had the iron chariots. If you want the reference, that is verse number 19 of chapter one in Judges. They encountered the peoples in the plain who had iron chariots. And it says there that they did not destroy them. They did not engage them in battle and remove them.

Joshua had told them prior to his death, “You will encounter enemies who have iron chariots. But be encouraged. God will give you the victory over even a strong foe who has iron chariots.”

Here they came against a foe with iron chariots and what did they do? They failed to heed the counsel that God had given to Joshua for them and they failed to route out the enemy that had the iron chariots, the first time since Ai that they had failed to believe God and to trust him in battle. And, thus, began the decline.

Following 10 victories at the beginning of chapter one, after they failed to remove the enemies with the iron chariots, they came into seven battles and lost all seven of them.

One of the battles that they lost involved Ephraim, Micah’s people. Micah lived in the territory owned by Ephraim, the children of Ephraim. We read in verse number 29 of Judges chapter one, it says:

“And Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them.”²

Now Joshua had defeated the former King of Gezer in one of the battles earlier in the book of Joshua. Ten kings came together in battle against Joshua. One of them was Gezer and Joshua led the children of Israel in victory over those 10 armies, one of them coming from Gezer. This now occurred some time after and the children of Ephraim now had the responsibility to take possession of all of their territory and they didn’t do it. They failed to believe God and they allowed the Canaanites in the city of Gezer to remain there. The city of Gezer sat at the crossroads of the main highway north and south and east and west, a crucial city for the whole territory of Ephraim. And they allowed the Canaanites to stay there in spite of God’s instructions.

We read in that verse 29 that the children of Ephraim failed to remove the Canaanites. And we find described in the life of Micah a failure to reject the influence and the presence of the gods of the Canaanites. For he included them in his house, in his shrine.

² Judges 1:29.

As we ponder these events in the life of Ephraim as well as specifically the life of Micah and his mother and his sons, what do they indicate to us about the character of Micah? Micah failed to believe God. He proved himself guilty of infidelity. Sin always begins with infidelity. Unbelief, a failure to believe and trust God. That forms the foundation and the root of all sin. What do we mean when we say infidelity?

Sometimes it helps us if we contrast it with the truth. Infidelity describes a lack of faith. Well, what do we mean when we say faith, then? Faith involves trust. Faith involves confidence in the one who has expressed promises to you and you trust the promises of the one who gave them because you trust the one who gave them. Isn't that kind of what we do in our lives?

So {?} I trust him. I don't believe him. I trust him. I trust her. I believe, but I don't believe them.

Doesn't that describe how we behave even in our day? And it all goes back to the person making the statements, whether or not we trust him, whether or not we find him trustworthy, faithful to his Word. Therefore we have confidence in him. That describes belief.

Well, unbelief goes just contrary to that description. It does not trust the one making the promises. It doubts the word of the one who gave them and chooses a different route.

We find that with Micah. Micah did not believe God. He belonged to the group of Ephraimites who did not drive out the Canaanites, because he has their gods in his house. He failed to trust and believe God, a damning indictment against him.

A further aspect of infidelity when we fail to trust someone we then believe something else. We find Micah doubting God and believing a lie. He based his life upon a lie, a false belief that the idols that he had in his house could somehow supplant and replace the living God, a sad description, indeed, of Micah. Infidelity, unbelief, doubt, believing a lie. And as a consequence of his unbelief, it says he abandoned God.

Now we see that described for us as it pertains to the whole nation of Israel in Judges chapter two verses 10 to 15. It says:

“And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel.”³

This is describing the third generation from Egypt. The first generation that came out of Egypt, they all died in the wilderness. The children of those who came out of Egypt and who died in the wilderness, their children came into the Promised Land. They experienced victory through the leadership of Joshua. They died. We now have arrived at

³ Judges 2:10.

the third generation. And how does it describe that third generation? It says they didn't know God.

Now that word know in the Bible has several different definitions to it, depending on how it is used in the Word in the original language translated as English know, K N O W. In this instance, that word means and describes as intimate relationship with someone else. It most frequently is used in the Bible to discuss the relationship between a husband and a wife, a sexual relationship, an intimacy that they share together.

This is describing how far away this third generation had transgressed from God. They did not have a personal, intimate fellowship with God. They had turned aside from him. And, in fact, as we read further into this passage we see what they had done. It says in verse 11:

And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress.⁴

That is a preview of the book of Judges. And we have examined that and we have looked at those judges.

The story of Micah describes for us how it all began. It all began very simply and yet had such horrendous implications and consequences.

What do we see in these events about the character and nature of God? We don't see God's hand immediately at work in the life of Micah and his family. However, we can know several things because of what God told us of his reaction and response to Micah and his family. God had told them—and we just read the verses—he told them, “If you disobey me and doubt my Word, I will withdraw.”

So we know that God had withdrawn his glorious presence from Micah and his family.

Well, stop and think for a moment what God had promised about his presence. When he brought the children of Israel out of Egypt what did he tell them? He said, “I will come down and make my presence with you and you will know I am there because you will see a cloudy pillar by day and a pillar of fire at night and you will know I am there.”

⁴ Judges 2:11-15.

And all though the 40 years in the wilderness, the pillar was there during the day and the pillar of fire at night stood over them. And as they came into the Promised Land, God's presence came with them. And he made himself manifest to them and his glory and in his splendor and in his might as they experienced victory over their enemies. God told them that if you turn aside from me, I will withdraw.

So we know that in the household of Micah and his family they did not experience the presence of God there. He had withdrawn as he promised he would. That, my friends, describes a horrible situation, lacking the presence of God. Cast solely upon my own imagination, my own wits, my own understanding and knowledge, God had withdrawn himself. That describes Micah and his family. Oh, they had some appearances of good things, all the silver, the 1100 pieces of silver reduced down now to 900 pieces of silver, a home, family, the apparent trappings of success, but lacking God's presence.

Also we see God's mercy because God could have struck them dead in a moment for their rebellion and their disobedience. He could have done that. That is what they deserved. That is what God said in his law. If you violate my law you fall into the consequence of death. And he could have brought death against them immediately for their unbelief, but he showed mercy, giving them time, giving them opportunity to turn to him and to seek his face. And he withheld judgment and he withheld judgment and he withheld judgment. And, as we have read through the accounts in the book of Judges, years would pass before God would bring real judgment against them through oppression of their enemies.

How does this fit into God's plan of redemption? Because it does. All of Scripture fits into God's divine plan of redemption. Sometimes we have to look and study a little bit to see just how it all fits in, but it all fits in and this does as well. I will remind you of the history of God's plan of redemption.

It all began in the garden in Eden. God created all things good and beautiful and perfect. And he planted Adam and Eve in the garden in Eden and it says that it was very good. And if God says something is very good, I think we can take his word for it.

What beauty they must have observed and enjoyed. Then the tempter came. Prior to the temptation of the serpent Adam and Eve enjoyed free fellowship with God. They had a mind and understanding that they could know God's will and they could obey him and they did for some time. And we don't know how long that time lasted that they obeyed and followed and fellowshiped with God in the garden, but they did. And when the tempter came, how did he tempt them? We see the pattern that Micah and his family and the children of Israel followed. It began in the garden.

What did the serpent say to Adam and Eve about God? "Don't believe him. Don't believe God. Why should you believe God? He knows that if you eat of that fruit in the middle of the garden that he told you not to eat, he knows that if you eat of that you will become

just like him. What kind of a god is that? How can you follow him? Follow me and listen to me instead.”

Well, that is kind of the Tom Hill interpretation, but that is what went on. That is the gist of it.

And Adam and Eve yielded to the temptation that the serpent presented to them and they ate of the fruit and immediately they died, because they lost the life that they enjoyed with God prior to eating the fruit. They no longer had the presence of God with them. They no longer even desired to be with the, because they ran and hid. And they tried to cover up their sin and their guilt by making garments of the leaves of the trees in the garden.

Fear entered their lives. Suspicion of the other, no longer a close bond and fellowship between Adam and Eve. Now they were at odds with each other, blaming each other for their predicament.

They began all of mankind so that all of their progeny down to you and to me, we inherited their sin. We inherited their wicked nature. And we stand in full bloom in Micah and his family, because they, too, just like Adam and Eve doubted God and listened to the temptation of the evil one who told them to abandon God and worship the gods of the Canaanites instead.

God wanted the children of Israel to see the consequences of sin. He told them what would happen. He warned them. He gave promises that if they would obey and follow him and of the blessings he would pour out upon them. And if they failed to obey him, the curses that he would bring upon them and it happened just exactly as he described it. When they obeyed him, he brought them victory over their enemies. When they abandoned him, he brought curses upon them, consequences of their sin. And God preserved the record of Micah and his family for their posterity to see. Yes, God is faithful even in his judgments. He is faithful in his blessings. He also proves faithful in his judgments as well.

And he wanted the children of Israel to see like he pointed out to Adam and Eve in the garden, they need a Savior. They need someone who can destroy not just a human enemy. They needed that to relieve them of the oppression of their enemies. But they also needed a change of nature, because their nature gravitates towards worshipping idols and doubting and abandoning God.

And so it points out for us in real life picture the necessity of a Savior.

Now, what correlation do these events have for our lives today? I think you can see the hint as I have described the occasion and the events in the life of Micah and his family, how current they become. They describe our day. They describe the Church of Jesus Christ today in many respects, sadly so. And they describe the lives of many people who

call themselves followers of Christ. The children of Israel picture for us the Church in the Old Testament.

Stephen described it in the book of Acts. He called the children of Israel the church in the Old Testament. And then there were individuals within the Church and how they responded. We see the response of the Church as a whole, the children of Israel and individuals within the nation, Micah. And it gives to us a picture and describes for us our day and how in so many respects the Church of Jesus Christ today has abandoned God and begun to cooperate with the world and taken into its operation and function, the way the world functions. And has described it in great glowing terms, these ... we want to win the lost for the Lord and we want to be a blessing for God just like Micah's mother.

Micah's mother pronounced a blessing upon her son and immediately said, "To show and prove my blessing, I am going to give him two idols."

And, my friends, there are many of us today who walk the same line. On the one hand we try to say we worship God and we love God. And over here we doubt him. We question him. We fail to believe him and trust him. And we go our separate way. My friends, that doesn't fit. That is not consistent.

And so what we read describes for us of the life of Micah describes our day and how many of us—I don't know your hearts, perhaps even you—as you have contemplated the story of Micah can see where you have failed to believe God and trust him, because the children of Israel and Micah and his family specifically describe for us our conditions today in the church of Jesus Christ as well as many of our lives. Therefore we must heed the warning of God. We must heed his warning and we must turn to him and trust the one who made the promises, because he has proven himself faithful and trustworthy and we must cast ourselves upon him for he alone has made provision for people like you and like me.

When he promised to Adam and Eve in the garden a Savior, he produced that Savior, Jesus Christ, his Son. And we have the knowledge of that in our day and we know that we can not only trust God, but his provision is made for us in his Son, the Lord Jesus. And so I call upon you today and I urge you today in the midst of our terrible, stressful times to turn and call upon God. Trust him, specifically his provision for you, Jesus, because through Jesus we find redemption from sin, that new nature that we need. We find through faith and trust in Jesus that he reconciles us back to God like back in the garden before the sin.

We find him restoring us and reviving us, granting us the ability to know and to understand once again his Word and the ability to obey and to trust him. And it all comes when we begin to trust his provision for us, Jesus.

I would urge you, implore you regardless of your state in life to call upon Christ. Trust him. When difficulty comes, call upon Christ. When hardship comes, call upon Christ.

When you realize that you need a Savior, call upon Christ. He alone can redeem, reconcile, restore, revive.

I pray that the Spirit of God will bring about in your life the faith to believe and to trust the Lord Jesus Christ and that in trusting him you will find his faithfulness true in your every day experience. Let's close with prayer, shall we?