

When Everyone Does What is Right in His Own Eyes: False Religion Spreads

Once God's religion has been mingled with man's teachings, it spreads quickly

Judges 18

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Prelude:

I. "The infection of false religion is easily transmitted" (Goebel Music).

- A. Amazingly, watch idolatry,
- B. a gross perversion of God, in Judges 18
 - 1. pass on from
 - a) mother
 - b) to son
 - c) to a Levite
 - d) to the tribe of Dan.
 - 2. How come no one opposed this idolatry?

Persuasion:

I. Judges 18.1a – No leadership

1 In those days there was no king in Israel.

- A. We have already been told this once (17.6),
 - 1. we will be reminded again in 19.1 and
 - 2. 21.25 will repeat it.
- B. Why are we reminded of this situation four times?
 - 1. What pattern are we seeing in the Book of Judges?
 - 2. Without a king, Israel sinned.
 - a) There would be a judge to help them get back on the right track.
 - b) When the judge died, another one did not immediately replace him.
 - (1) Thus, Israel went into sin.

- (2) When they did get a king,
 - (a) one immediately replaced another, but
 - (b) sin was still a problem.

C. What was Israel's problem?

1. When they had good leaders, it showed them
 - a) the need for leaders and
 - b) their need for the leadership of God.
2. When they had bad leaders, it showed them
 - a) the failures of following their own hearts and
 - b) that the problem is the heart of men.
3. The problem is the heart.
 - a) Who is king of your life?
 - b) Is it yourself?
 - c) Is it the American government?
 - d) Is it Jesus Christ?

II. Judges 18.1b-6 – God is with you

1b 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. 2 So the children of Dan sent five men of their family from their territory, men of valor 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 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?" 4 He said to them, "Thus and so Micah did for me. He has hired me, and I have become his 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." 6 And the priest said to them, "Go in peace. The presence of the LORD be with you on your way."

A. The men from Dan did not question

1. why the Levite did not function according to the Law of Moses!
- B. It was good that they wanted to inquire of God, because
 1. we are ignorant and shortsighted.
 2. Yet, God knows all and is willing to give wisdom.
- C. Then again, they were asking the wrong person to inquire of God for them,

“Far too many today ‘pass by Shiloh’ and seek their oracle in some other place, just as these Danites did. Why on earth do men ask of one who is a traitor to both the religion of God and to God Himself, questions that pertain to spiritual safety?” (Goebel Music).

III. Judges 18.7–10 – The dangers of isolation

- A. There is more to life than personal quietness and security,

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. The text implies that their quietness and security were not good.

“It seems that they cared for no one and nobody cared about them. This might be seen as a city where ‘me, myself, and I’ was the only concern” (Goebel Music).
2. It is not good because they kept themselves separate from other people.
 - a) No ruler could put them to shame, but
 - b) it also meant they had no help in case of attack.
3. America has been quiet and secure, but
 - a) we have not isolated ourselves from other countries.
 - b) Others backed us and supported us during our time of need in 2001.
4. Likewise, seek the fellowship of others.

- a) Seek Christian friends.
 - b) Seek friendships with people in the world.
- B. The Danites saw that they could take the land,

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

1. They were in the future homeland of Samson.
2. Just like the spies that Joshua sent,
 - a) they brought back a good report,
 - (1) encouraging the people to take the land, because
 - (2) God had given it to them.
 - b) They were different than ten of the spies whom Moses sent.
3. They warned their brethren against idleness.
 - a) Why be idle when God is ready to pour out His blessings?
 - b) The tribe of Dan had hesitated to take possession of their inheritance.
4. If God has promised us something,
 - a) we can take possession of it immediately.
 - b) For example, forgiveness, inner peace, etc.

IV. Judges 18.11–15 – What is to be done about idolatry?

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 {Literally Camp of 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. 14 Then the five men who had gone to spy out the country of Laish answered and said to their brethren, "Do you know that there are in

these houses an ephod, household idols, a carved image, and a molded image? Now therefore, consider what you should do.” 15 So they turned aside there, and came to the house of the young Levite man—to the house of Micah—and greeted him.

- A. Did they see the valuable silver there?
- B. Did they see gods as beneficial?
 1. Either way, the silver images were not theirs.
 2. The idols and the idolaters should be destroyed.

V. Judges 18.16–21 – Perverted religion spreads

16 The six hundred men armed with their weapons of war, who were of the children of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate. 17 Then the five men who had gone to spy out the land went up. Entering there, they took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image. The priest stood at the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men who were armed with weapons of war. 18 When these went into Micah’s house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?” 19 And they said to him, “Be quiet, put your hand over your mouth, and come with us; be a father and a priest to us. Is it better for you to be a priest to the household of one man, or that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?”

- A. What is one priest to do against 600 armed men?

“See what little care this sorry priest took of his gods. See how impotent these sorry gods were, that could not keep themselves from being stolen...[the Danites] must have *gods to go before them*, not of their own making indeed, but, which was as bad, of their own stealing” (Henry).

“Is it possible that these people could put their trust in silver stolen from a mother by her son, cursed by the mother, cast and graven into a lifeless image, stolen from its owner, manipulated by a Levite for filthy lucre, attended by a kidnapped priest?” (Roehrs).

- B. The priest goes to the highest bidder,

20 So the priest’s heart was glad; and he took the ephod, the household

idols, and the carved image, and took his place among the people. 21 Then they turned and departed, and put the little ones, the livestock, and the goods in front of them.

1. He perverted God's religion with Micah in Ephraim,
 - a) why not with 600 men from Dan?
 - b) There was more money and more prestige.
2. This is what got Israel into trouble so often in the Book of Judges.

VI. Judges 18.22–26 – Bothered that someone stole his gods

22 When they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men who were in the houses near Micah's house gathered together and overtook the children of Dan. 23a And they called out to the children of Dan.

A. Here is

1. the local neighborhood watch, or
2. the local gang.

B. The Danites confronted their pursuers,

23b So they turned around and said to Micah, "What ails you, that you have gathered such a company?" 24 So he said, "You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and you have gone away. Now what more do I have? How can you say to me, 'What ails you?'"

1. He is angry and sarcastic.
2. Interestingly, he had stolen the silver for these gods,
 - a) then someone stole the silver gods from him.
 - b) What is wrong with these gods?
 - (1) First, a woman had to dedicate their substance to Yahweh God.
 - (2) Second, they had their substance stolen.
 - (3) Third, they are finally made into various forms.

- (4) Fourth, they were stolen again.
- c) Does something seem wrong here?
 - (1) These are gods?
 - (2) How come Micah could not see the irony?
- d) He created defenseless gods!
- 3. If our god can be stolen, something is wrong.
 - a) No one can take away the true God.
 - b) Do you know how to discover your god?
 - (1) What do you value as the greatest good in your life?
 - (2) Is there something that if it was taken away from you,
 - (a) you would much rather die?
- 4. Look again at Micah's words recorded in verse 24.
 - a) Once he realized that his gods were gone,
 - b) he asked, "Now what more do I have?"
 - (1) He did not give the God of Israel a thought.
- 5. The true God cannot be stolen from us.
 - a) On the contrary, if our things are stolen from us,
 - b) He can replace them.
 - (1) When a king of Judah in Second Chronicles 25.9
 - (a) asked what to do about losing millions of dollars in silver,
 - (b) a prophet who knew the true God set the record straight,

9 Then Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what shall we do about the hundred talents which I have given to the troops of Israel?" And the man of God answered, "The LORD is able to give you much more than this" (2Ch 25.9).

C. The children of Dan used their larger numbers,

25 And the children of Dan said to him, “Do not let your voice be heard among us, lest angry men fall upon you, and you lose your life, with the lives of your household!” 26 Then the children of Dan went their way. And when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house.

1. The men of Dan offered no logical Scriptural defense
 - a) for their theft and
 - b) for turning to idolatry.
2. What is the matter with these men?
 - a) Do they want gods who
 - (1) cannot protect themselves from thievery
 - (2) to help them conquer new land?
 - b) Why do people put their trust in anything but the true God?

“...these men might have even killed for these gods (Jud. 18.25). Thus it seems they forgot another commandment...Their idolatry began in theft, and could have led them into murder. Where is man without a standard, without the true God? When one leaves that which is the rule, the supreme law, there is no telling just what he will do or where he will be found” (Goebel Music).

3. Micah’s gods were weak.
 - a) If they were true gods,
 - b) they could have helped him defeat the 600 men.
 - (1) Samson defeated over 4,300.
 - (2) Gideon and 300 defeated 185,000.

VII. Judges 18.27–29 – No one to help

27 So they took the things Micah had made, and the priest who had belonged to him, and went to Laish, to a people quiet and secure; and they struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire. 28 There was no deliverer, because it was far from Sidon, and they had no ties with anyone. It

was in the valley that belongs to Beth Rehob. So they rebuilt the city and dwelt there.

- A. Do not let the quiet and secure nature of Laish
 - 1. convince you that these people were righteous.
 - 2. The Lord brought Israel from Egypt
 - a) to remove the people of the Land of Canaan, because
 - b) they were idolaters who practiced many evil things.
- B. They honor their father,

29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born to Israel. However, the name of the city formerly was Laish.

- 1. Thus, this must have been the first place that the tribe of Dan conquered.
- 2. It is sad that they used idols during their campaign to take the city.

VIII. Judges 18.30, 31 – Perverted religion remained in Dan

30 Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, [actually Moses is correct, DR] and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. 31 So they set up for themselves Micah's carved image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh (Jdg 18).

- A. Once a sin is allowed or promoted
 - 1. in a nation or group of people,
 - 2. it is hard to displace it.
 - a) It was not until the captivity associated with Shiloh
 - b) that it was removed.
 - (1) This event is shown more in First Samuel.
- B. Jonathan was the grandson of Moses.

1. This shows that the episodes of chapters 17 and 18 were before there were any judges.
 2. It also shows how quickly apostasy can enter a family.
- C. Dan became one of the main places of idolatry that King Jeroboam set up in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Exhortation:

I. What is your god?

- A. Can it be taken from you?
- B. Are you greater than your god is?

II. If you are not a Christian,

- A. you are separated from God.
- B. Isaiah 59 presents a shocking truth,

**1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened,
That it cannot save;
Nor His ear heavy,
That it cannot hear.**

**2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God;
And your sins have hidden His face from you,
So that He will not hear.**
(Isa 59.1–2).