

Title: 'As We See Fit': A study of the book of Judges- Part 20- "*The Point of No Return*"

Key text: Judges 17:1-13

Suppl. texts: Judges 16:31b,

Introduction: Last time, we completed the story of Samson. We saw Samson become the prized slave of the Philistines. Samson lost his eyes & existed in total darkness. The man who went wherever he wanted now had to be led everywhere. Instead of bringing glory to Yahweh, the Philistines praised Dagon, their false god, for defeating Samson. God then ordained another slave or servant to providentially place Samson between the main pillars of the temple. There, the Philistines made sport of Samson & forced him to perform for them. Around 3,000 of God's enemies were present that day when Samson uttered the first prayer recorded in his story. Samson asked Yahweh to restore his strength one more time to achieve one more victory for the Lord. Samson pushed with all his might & he killed more in his death than in his life. Tonight, we'll see that after the death of the last major judge, things go from bad to worse.

Outline: *read Judges 17:1-13.*

1. The cycle is over (kind of)

- The time of the major & minor judges has concluded. No further mention of judges.
- With the death of Samson, the period of the regional judges ends. There are no kings & there are no leaders.
- Some lists of the judges will include both the time of Eli & Samuel as judges, but for our purposes in studying this book, the time of the judges is over.
- We might think that somehow things will get better without such flawed people, such as Samson, to lead them.
- However, things are going from bad to worse.
- The point of the rest of the book of Judges is that the people are beyond help & even beyond hope of turning back to Yahweh.
- The old cycle concluded with the closing verse in **Judges 16:31b**; "*He (Samson) had led Israel twenty years.*"
- Some question where the next chapter is placed in the chronological timeline order of the book of Judges, whether or not it was after Samson, or during the Judges period, but in another area of the country.
- We can say the writer intentionally places it here. Possibly, Samuel.

2. A new cycle begins

- Without any central headship, the people devolve into doing whatever seems best.
- A pragmatic approach is portrayed in the closing chapters of the book of Judges.

- God ordained three major institutions for humanity. The marriage/home, the government, & the church (OC: Tabernacle/Temple/worship system, NC: the Church).
- A new story begins, & it feels like we're already in the middle of a story.
- **Vs. 1-2:** *"Now a man named Micah from the hill country of Ephraim said to his mother, 'The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from you and about which I heard you utter a curse-I have that silver with me; I took it.' Then his mother said, 'The LORD bless you, my son!'"*
- It also begins with an admission of guilt & sin. A man, Micah, stole from his mother.
- It also begins with a curse from the mother upon the thief.
- Perhaps because he was worried about the curse, he returned his mother's money.
- Therefore, it also strangely begins with a blessing or canceling of the curse.
- There's also an act of worship, but a misguided one.
- The name Micah means "Who is like Yahweh". Which is funny because he forms his own gods & basically he & his mother worship them as Yahweh.
- **Vs. 3:** *"When he returned the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, she said, 'I solemnly consecrate my silver to the LORD for my son to make a carved image and a cast idol. I will give it back to you.'"*
- She claims to be making the offering to Yahweh (LORD) but wants her offering to be made or cast into an idol. She wants to control where & how her offering is spent.
- *How many people still do this in churches today?* Dedication without letting go.
- She roughly 'gives' 18+% to the 'Lord' while keeping 81+%. **Generous right?**
- In case you're keeping score, in the first three verses, the mother/son duo has broken commandments: #1-no other gods, #2-no graven images, #3-LORD's name in vain, #5-honor your father & mother, #8-do not steal, #9-bear false witness/lie, #10-no coveting. That's 7 out of 10. Things have gone from bad to worse for sure!
- **Vs. 4:** *"So he returned the silver to his mother, and she took two hundred shekels of silver and gave them to a silversmith, who made them into the image and the idol. And they were put in Micah's house."*
- **Vs. 5-6:** *"Now this man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and some idols and installed one of his sons as his priest. In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit."* Here's the most descriptive verse of the entire book & title of our series. They had a King; His name was Yahweh, but they lived as if they had no king.

3. The cycle of covetousness

- You might have overlooked the reason for the new cycle: coveting.
- Coveting is defined as: having a strong, selfish desire for something that belongs to someone else. This was certainly true of Micah, as he stole his mother's silver.
- Coveting is the 10th & final commandment, which encompasses them all.

- She must have been wealthy since the loss doesn't seem to have made her destitute.
- However, Micah's covetousness doesn't end with the return of the silver.
- **Vs. 7-13;** *"A young Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, who had been living within the clan of Judah, left that town in search of some other place to stay. On his way he came to Micah's house in the hill country of Ephraim. Micah asked him, 'Where are you from?' 'I'm a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah,' he said, 'and I'm looking for a place to stay.' Then Micah said to him, 'Live with me and **be my father and priest,** and I'll give you ten shekels of silver a year, your clothes and your food.' So the Levite agreed to live with him, and the young man was to him like one of his sons. Then Micah installed the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in his house. And Micah said, 'Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since this Levite has become my priest.'" There's so much wrong with what we just read.*
 - **First**, a Levite is living in Bethlehem, in Judah. That might seem like no big deal, but he's not living in one of the assigned Levitical towns.
 - God hadn't given the Levites a land inheritance because they were given the sacrifices & part of the offerings made to Yahweh. They had use of land for planting & living in certain areas; Bethlehem was not one of them.
 - It is very likely that this Levite is living elsewhere because people are likely not worshiping Yahweh correctly by bringing their tithes into the storehouse. So, he has to survive elsewhere. The priest gladly accepts the position from a place of coveting.
 - **Second**, the people were not to set up images or shrines, & worship was only to be done at the Tabernacle, which was located at Shiloh during the time of the Judges.
 - He had the right tribe for a priest, but God was the only one who could assign the priesthood. The priest was turning away from his calling as a Levite.
 - He also became the source of income for the priest, which should have been God.
 - **Finally**, Micah falsely assumed that because he had a Levite priest, God would systematically have to bless him.
 - However, he was a thief; he made a graven image, he created a false system of worship & first installed his own son, then a misguided Levite priest, & then thought he & God were fine. Wow, how far God's people have fallen.
 - Micah coveted his mother's wealth; his mom wanted to control her offering; & the Levite priest, who should've rebuked both, coveted the security of his position.

As We See Fit

A Study of the Book of Judges- Part 20

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Around 3,000 of God's enemies were present that day when Samson uttered the first prayer recorded in his story. Samson asked Yahweh to restore his strength one more time to achieve one more victory for the Lord. Samson pushed with all his might & he killed more in his death than in his life. Tonight, we'll see that after the death of the last major judge, things go from bad to worse.

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- The point of the rest of the book of Judges is that the people are beyond _____ & even beyond _____ of turning back to Yahweh.
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- Without any central headship, the people _____ into doing whatever seems best.
- A _____ approach is portrayed in the closing chapters of the book of Judges.
- God ordained three _____ for humanity. The _____/_____, the _____, & the _____.
- A _____ begins, & it feels like we're already in the _____ of a story.
- It also begins with an _____ of _____ & sin.
- It also begins with a _____ from the mother upon the thief.

- Therefore, it also strangely begins with a _____ or _____ of the curse.
- There's also an _____ of worship, but a _____ one.
- She wants to _____ where & how her offering is spent.
- Here's the most _____ verse of the entire book & _____ of our series.

3. The cycle of _____

- Coveting is defined as: having a _____, _____ desire for something that belongs to someone else.
- Coveting is the 10th & final commandment, which _____ them all.
- That might seem like no big deal, but he's not living in one of the _____ Levitical towns.
- **Second**, the people were not to set up images or shrines, & worship was only to be done at the _____, which was located at _____ during the time of the Judges.
- He also became the _____ of income for the priest, which should have been God.
- **Finally**, Micah falsely assumed that because he had a Levite priest, God would _____ have to bless him.
- Wow, how _____ God's people have _____.