

JUDGES 17

MICAHA AND HIS IDOLS, PART I

The first of the two episodes in this final portion of Judges exhibits much degeneracy and superstition; and in the characters who appear in the narrative, we search in vain for a single trace of moral or spiritual elevation! Micah, an Ephraimite, had appropriated 1,100 silver shekels (about 27½ pounds of silver, worth about \$8,800*) which belonged to his mother. With this silver, she had intended to make a couple of images – supposedly for the worship of Jehovah! Upon discovering her loss, she had impetuously cursed the unknown perpetrator of the crime. Her son (probably alarmed for his own safety) confessed the theft and returned the money. And now the mother's curse was changed into a blessing. But only a portion of the silver – 200 shekels (about 5 pounds) of it – was given to a worker in metals to produce a graven and a molten image.

The love of money made Micah so undutiful to his mother as to rob her, and it made her so unkind to her son as to curse him. Outward losses drive righteous people to their prayers, but they drive wicked people to their curses. Alas! The same mouth – when there is no grace in the heart – utters both curses and blessings. This woman's silver was her idol already, even *before* it was made into a graven or a molten image! Indeed, money was actually the idol of both the mother and the son. And here we see the dreadful state of the minds of all human beings by nature! Micah and his mother agreed to turn their money into a false god, and set up idol-worship in their family. And is it not strange that both the parent and the child still pretended to retain a reverence for Jehovah, the God of Israel – when they were thus openly violating one of His express commandments in Exodus 20:4-5?

What was the cause of this corruption? “Every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (verse 6) – and then they soon did that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord. This sad defection in Israel was because, in those days, there was no king – neither order nor government. There was no ministry of God to tell men of their transgressions, and there was no magistrate to punish them. Therefore, let us learn to set a proper value upon those two great blessings of the Lord – a standing ministry, to instruct people in the truths of salvation; and a well-ordered government to protect those ministers. Remember: lawful and God-fearing rulers are not a terror to those who do good works, but to those who do evil (Rom. 13:3).

Micah set up a private sanctuary – a “house of gods.” It was very close to the tabernacle of the Lord, which was in Shiloh. And in lieu of a descendant of

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *Micah and his mother unite in committing the sin of idolatry – verses 1-6*
- ❖ *A young Levite becomes the priest for Micah's idols – verses 7-13*

Aaron, Micah consecrated one of his own sons to be his priest, and to wear the ephod which he made.

Subsequently, Micah became acquainted with a wandering Levite from Bethlehem in the tribe of Judah, who was in search of employment. It is a clear evidence of the decay of true religion when God's ministers are found wandering around, and not at their place of duty – either out of choice or of necessity. Micah persuaded this young Levite to become the spiritual “father” and priest of his household. With exultant self-satisfaction, Micah exclaimed – in the true spirit of those who, in all ages, have mistaken external rituals for true Godliness – “Now know I that Jehovah will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to be my priest!” As if God could show His favor on worship that was clearly being done against His commandment anyway! Many please themselves with their own delusions; and if Providence unexpectedly brings anything to their hands that furthers them in their evil ways, they are inclined to think that God is pleased with them. Is it not astonishing that Micah would even look for good from the hand of God, while he was thus doing evil? But alas! How greatly does sin harden the heart and deceive the soul! And as for the Levite – his true character is marked out only too plainly as well. How awful it is when a minister of God hires himself out in the service of idols! And in the long run, what a pitiful compensation he received for his services – bread just enough to keep him from starving, a rough garment, and about 4 ounces of silver (worth about \$65*).

Blessed be the name of the Lord that the day has come when the Fountain has been opened for sin and uncleanness! Let us pray that our idols may be cut out of our lives, and that we may be filled with the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus!

Lord Jesus! We repent of times when money, power, our own selves, or something else has been an idol to us. We pray for grace to dethrone all usurpers to Your throne in our hearts, so that they do not become like Micah's “house of gods.” We also beseech You to give us pastors after Your own heart, and to not let not Your faithful servants be obliged to wander to seek places for themselves! Make them more anxious to win souls than to gain kingdoms! Let the salvation of sinners through Your blood and righteousness be the sole object of their work, night and day. Bless them, gracious Lord, in their ministry; and when You come again, may they obtain that crown of glory which never fades away! Amen.

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*based on the current value of silver
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