

Whom will you follow

Judges 17:1-13

- Remember that I mentioned the sordid stories we'll read in the book of judges that will have you shaking your head, well here is one. The events described in these next 5 chapters truly show how far the nation that had once marched triumphantly through Canaan to the glory of God had fallen, and how wicked the people had become. In three major areas of life > **the home, the ministry, society**, we'll see a people living in total **confusion, chaos, and deception**.

V1-13

- God has established 3 major institutions for society > **the home, the government, and the church**, and at the crust of these 3 institutions is the **home**, it's the foundation, so much so that if you remove the home from the other 2 they will eventually crumble, as we see happening today. Our story starts in the home, a mother and son are introduced to us, the sons name is **Micah**- it means "**Who is like Jehovah**", this tells us that mom is religious, and that she has some knowledge of God.
- Now apparently there's been a robbery in which 11 hundred shekels of silver has been stolen from the family, a yearly wage was 10 shekels so the amount stolen from this mom was a fortune, a life's savings, and as we'll read she's upset, boiling mad you could say.
- V1-2** she's so angry that she pronounces a curse on the thief, and upon hearing that the thief comes forward, and it's her son Micah. Not "**Who is like Jehovah**" he can't be the thief, sadly he is not living up to his name, for sadly the motivation behind confessing to his crime and restoring the money wasn't from a **fear of the Lord**, but a **fear of the curse**.
- Upon hearing the news she retracts her curse with her blessing, because it's her son that makes it okay, **no correction, no questioning**, just **blessing**, this reveals a lot about the character of Micah, his mother and the spiritual state of Israel during this period of time, for its gets worse, a lot worse. **V3-5** again we see that she is religious, as she tells him she had dedicated the money to the Lord for his benefit, paying someone to make a couple of idols for her boy.
- Dedicating something to the Lord is a good things **1Sam 1:27-28**- Hannah did it with her child Samuel, **Gen 28:22**- Jacob did it with his possessions, but what she is dedicating is all wrong **Deut 27:15**, and she's doing it in honor of her son. To show us how parents worship of God does affect the children, Micah whose name means "Who is like Jehovah" already possesses a house for false gods, so he takes the idols home and places it there and then takes one of his sons and anoints him as priest wow!

- Do you see how this works > idolatry always starts with ignorance, Mom has a corrupt view of God, she thinks she's doing what's best for her son but unbeknownst to her she is actually ruining him, and it's all shielded by false worship, as she names her son "**Who is like Jehovah**" and all the while she models a life in opposition of Jehovah > **2 Tim 3:5**.
- Her son follows in her footsteps and adapts her view of God, but he takes it a step further, becoming a collector of false gods, and accepting all beliefs to the point he builds a shrine to these idols at home and passes it on to his son making him a priest, so **3** generations are now affected. **V6** sums up the entire book of Judges and this sordid account of false worship, because there was no Godly leadership, **the home, government and worship community**, was corrupt, leaving a person to figure it out on their own which is always a recipe for disaster.
- **V7-9** we just saw **confusion** in the **home**, now we'll see **confusion** in the **ministry**, in the book of Numbers God had set up **48** cities for the Levites to live and minister in this was not one of them, so we see another example of people "doing what is right in their own eyes". Notice he is a priest for hire > **V8** looking for a place wherever he could find.
- Sadly we see this today, people out of position claiming that they are being driven by the call on their lives when in reality it's not a call but a desire, and you can tell by the "**by any means necessary**" way they go about fulfilling it. **3** ways of setting up a protection plan when it comes to doing ministry
 1. Authority- am I under authority or do I have the final say so
 2. Accountability- am I a lone ranger, a maverick, are people in my life asking tough questions
 3. Alignment- am I in the right position, only having the **1st** **2** in place allows you to answer this
- **V10-13** Remember he had initially hired his son to be a priest, now he's demoted his son and hired a real Levite, sadly the Levite doesn't realize that he's not suppose to be working for man but for God. But Micah's paying him **10** shekels a yr and a new suit every yr for his services, so now he is officially a spiritual mercenary.
- Ministers do this today, the church pays them for their services, buy their clothes and tell them what is acceptable for them to preach and what is not. Notice it was Micah who consecrates him, so you have an idolater laying hands on you and empowering you for ministry, folks there is a whole lot of wrong here on so many levels.
- **1st** notice how **false consecration** breeds **false confidence**, Micah's consecration meant nothing at all, he had no authority from God to declare a renegade Levite as set apart by God to the service of an idolatrous shrine. **V13** but afterward Micah declares "**now I know that the Lord will be good to me since I have a Levite as priest**". He has completely deceived himself, as this is based on nothing more than superstition and not the Word of God.

- **2nd** in this tragic event each person is guilty of terrible sin, but Micah sin was passed down by his mom's delusion of God, the Levite sin was purposeful because at the very least he should know what the Word of God says.
- **3RD** we read the Levite was content to dwell, the arrangements was fine with him, he was satisfied with exchanging the will of God with the things of the world. Micah sin stemmed from ignorance, the Levites came from greed, money and some new clothes drove him from the place of contentment with the Lord to look for contentment from the world, and now he's just a hireling, someone who serves God for what it can give him, instead of what he can give God.
- **Jn 10:11-13**- Jesus the good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep, a hireling flees to save himself, leaving the sheep to either fend for themselves or be devoured by its enemies. That's the difference between someone who is called by God and someone who is being led by the flesh, one puts **God** and the **people** first, while the other puts **self** and their **desires** first.