

Judges 17-21

“Right in Their Own Eyes”

Introduction

- Tonight we have come to the darkest section of the book of Judges and maybe even the entire Bible – pretty bleak stuff tonight – aren't you glad you came!
 - For 16 chapters we have seen Israel in a cycle of sin – they turn from the Lord, the Lord sends consequences, they eventually repent and God raises up a judge
 - And this cycle repeats itself over and over again and the stories contained in this book are really confusing – why are these people doing what they are doing
 - But as bad as it gets in the first 16 chapters, nothing prepares you for this final section

And I believe God includes the section of chapters 17-21 to show us what the moral condition of the nation of Israel really was during this time, what the judges were facing

- and to give us insight into how dark the human heart is when we remove God and His Word as the standard in our lives and replace it with what our own heart thinks it right

You see over and over in this book the Bible reports that, “In those days there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes.” – Judges 17:6, 21:25

- and as we go through this section tonight we are going to see the results of everyone doing what was right in their own eyes, spiritually, morally and governmentally – if you are taking notes...

“Right in their own eyes” – Judges 17-21

Spiritually – Judges 17-18

Morally – Judges 19

Governmentally – Judges 20-21

- lets look at those one at a time

“Right in their own eyes” – Judges 17-21

Spiritually – Judges 17-18

- God set up a system of how he was to be worship – whether that was in ancient Israel with the tabernacle and then the temple or the church today
 - Those methods of meeting with God were ordained by the Lord
 - But the people in the time of the judges were under no such constraints when it came to worship – the were doing what was right in their own eyes when it came to spiritual things
- See how far they had fallen from the way God wanted to be worship in the Law we just finished studying
 - Read chapter 17

The story starts out with this young man Micah steal 1,100 pieces of silver from his mother

- now that is a lot of money
 - later in the story Micah is going to hire his own private priests for the salary of 10 silver shekels a year, a year!!!
 - in other words this young man steals 100 times more than some people annual income – crazy
- And then when his mom puts a curse on whoever stole the money, then Micah gives it back
 - Parental curses were seen as heavy and they would be honored – so Micah wants to get back into good graces

- And the Mom just switches tones – oh I meant to give it to you my good little boy, my good little thief boy

She is parent, we can all do this as parents

- I remember when my son was a toddler at the church in Texas, I walk into the children's ministry area – this place is a mess so I start to think - don't these parents know how to control their children, no discipline that is what's wrong with America today – how many kids did we have in here tonight – and the lady said one – Jonathan, your son – and I immediately start in – well he hasn't been getting much sleep, he is acting out because I been away – excuse, excuse – as long as it is my kid

Micah's mom says – I had wholly dedicated that money to the Lord – oh to do what with it?

- To make a carved Image and a molded image – hold up? – what???
- You dedicated them to God to make an idol
- A carved image was carved out of wood and then covered in silver
- And a molded image, the silver was melted down and put into a mold
- You dedicated this money to God and what you think He wants you to do with it is make a couple of false god idols? – what is going on here
- Doesn't that clearly violate the first and second commandments of the Big Ten – the original law – of course of it does

But this is the problem – when we start removing the standards of what God says it right or how he wants to be worship and start to set up our own – trouble is going to be the result

- but this is just the beginning of Micah's home inventing their own spiritually
- next he ordains one of his sons to be priest
- Now the Levities were suppose to minister in the tabernacle at Shiloh and the family of Aaron in the tribe of Levi were to be priests – not the son of Micah
- But no worries because we also learn in chapter 17 about this priest who later we will find out is name Jonathan

He is traveling around looking for work

- now the Levities were supposed to be supported by the tithes and the offerings of the rest of the nation of Israel
- but everyone is doing what they think it best
- they are setting up little false churches in their homes and so what happens
- the real levities are out of work
- So this guy is traveling and comes to Micah house and Micah offers him and job – 10 shekels of silver a year, some fresh clothes and room and board
- That is pretty good deal in those times, so the priest signs on
- And Micah thinks – now God will bless me, because I have a real Levite in my house
- Forget that I am worshipping false gods, forget that only the family of Aaron are supposed to be priests
- Hey I have my lucky rabbit foot Levite – God will bless me
- And why wouldn't he think that? Everyone is doing what they think it right, they have completely throw out the rule book – so the fun continues in chapter 18

Read all of chapter 18

- so Micah has his own little priest, he has his own little religion, he says words like Jehovah, but he worships these false idols
- and while all this is going on, the tribe of Dan is deciding they need to move

If you remember from our study in the book of Joshua, it was the last book we studied, but Joshua gave the children of Israel portions of the land as God saw best

- the land that Dan receive in near modern Day Tel Aviv – **Pictures of Tel Aviv**

This is sweet spot

- the problem was it was right next to the Philistine territory
 - and they would constantly be battling against them
 - and Dan got tired of the battle
- so they send out a scout party to find new and better land
 - and as they are traveling north they come upon the house of Micah and his priest
- Somehow they know the priest, or recognize his clothing as a priest and they want to know what he is doing
 - Oh – I'm Micah's priest, I found steady work
 - So the men from Dan want this Priest to ask God if He will bless their mission
- And this priest with no relationship with God, this pastor of a false church says – God says he is with you – go your way

They do and find this town pagan town of Laish in the very northern part of Israel

- it has no natural allies, just a weak little town and the resources of water and good soil are abundant up there
 - so the Danites hatch a plan, to come, slaughter the inhabitants of Laish

But as the army is on its way from Dan to what will be New Dan, they stop off at Micah's house to steal his gods and his priests

- and I love it Micah comes out to protest
 - why have you stolen the gods that I have made
 - now there is so much wrong with that statement
- #1 – If your God can be stolen – not a good God
- #2 – If you made your god, just make a new one
- #3 – If you have to rescue your god – really?

But the tribe of Dan, tells Micah to put your hand over your mouth, we are taking these things

- the priest Jonathan gets a promotion from priest of a family, to priest of the whole tribe
 - the Tribe of Dan easily defeats the city of Laish
 - And they move their territory
- When you go to Israel today, you can go to Tel Dan and it is a beautiful spot, but it is no where near Tel Aviv where they were suppose to go

Now some of us can say, well they were being oppressed by the Philistines

- they land was good, the water was plentiful in northern Israel – why not
 - because Dan will be the point from which idolatry takes a root in Israel from this point forward
 - They fall as a tribe
- And as I was studying that I was thinking – I wonder how many of us, God keeps in a battle – and we think – when will the battle stop God – this isn't fair, its hard
 - And if we are able we make a choice to leave the place God has us to somewhere we deem to be better
 - But we realize often too late – we needed the battle – it kept us close to the Lord, not comfortable, but close
 - God knows what He is doing – seek Him, get His heart and obey
 - Don't invent your own way to follow God

Verse 31 of chapter 18 is so telling

- the entire time the tabernacle was there in Shiloh
 - they way God wanted to be approached, the system He set up to meet with Him – all right there, available for us

We think I am not fulfilled, I am not happy

- so we take a little from this belief system and a little from this idea from the world
 - and we make God into our own image, of our own making
 - but it never fulfills – it never brings the joy it promises

- And the whole time, God, His Word, even His church, as flawed as we are, its still ordained by God – its all right there
 - Draw near to me and I will draw near to you
 - My Word will be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path
 - The body of believers can strengthen and disciple
 - But so many in the world today – say no thanks – I will worship in the way that is right in my own eyes

Well the plot thickens or really sickens

- but don't misunderstand – what we are about to read, would not have happened, if people stuck with the way God told them to worship and relate to Him spiritually
 - they don't – chapter 19-21 is the result
 - lets look at chapter 19

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- just a sick story – you feel like you need a bath after reading it
 - but understand why God allows it to be in the Word of God

Again everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes - but please notice that – not what is wrong, they are doing what they think to be right

But they have obviously replaced what God holds up as true in His Word and replaced it with what their heart thinks is right

- and chapter 19 of Judges is a cautionary tale of how bad it can get when we start to do that

It starts with little personal compromise

- just consider this Levite
 - First of all he has a concubine
 - A concubine was like a second class wife – you provided for her food, clothing, shelter and in turn you used her for physical intimacy
 - The children you had with them you were not required to take care of
- so what a great guy, takes a girl to satisfy himself, but only wants it to cost the minimum
 - Sometime a concubine was used to produce children if that wife was barren, but there is no mention of a wife in this story
 - This man has got this girl to be physical with her and the relationship doesn't go much further than that

Also we see in this story this priest has no problem with drinking to excess

- The frequent use of the word, and they let their heart be merry simply means they drank until they were drunk
 - And this Levite does it when he is with the girl's father, he does it when he is in the home of the stranger they meet in Gibeah
- In fact when one asks how can any human being sleep through the night while a girl you are involved with is being rapped outside all night
 - I guarantee you besides this guy being a lowlife, is there was alcohol involved

I just point that out to warn you – the Bible does not condemn consuming alcohol – not at all

- but pray it though because for some of us, maybe just people like me who doesn't do anything in moderation – one can lead to the other – be warned
 - personally for me – I have never been drunk, because I never drink
 - and I know that is not a cool position and people have said to me –do you do that with everything – to avoid sin, kind of
- I have never cheated on my wife, because I don't spend time alone with girls who are not my wife

- I think it can be wise to put perimeters in your life – like the Pharisees did to protect them from breaking the law
- Its wrong to think – that makes God love me more
- Its wrong to think – I am more spiritual
- Its wrong to think your perimeters is the new law – Let me say again for clarity – drinking is not a sin, being drunk is
- I just love you guys and I saw causal drinking turn into something much more in my family growing up – and it still hurts to this day

➤ Enough said on that

So this partying passionate priest leaves his father in law's house after 5 days

- They finally get up to leave, but it afternoon, and it not safe to travel in Israel in the time of the Judges at night, so they look for a place to stay
 - He doesn't want to stay in Jerusalem for the Jebusites were still in control there – no he wants to stay with God's people in Gibeah, so sad, four miles down the road

They come to the city, at first no one will take him in – finally an older man coming in late from the field takes them in and provides for them

- Well the men of the city gather around and the same scenario that took place in Sodom and Gomorrah transpires

Now there is so much about this story we don't understand – why did the man of the house offer his daughter to these animals

- Well we need to understand is hospitality is everything in the middle East – so the old man offers his daughter, but instead the man throws his concubine to these wolves
- and even more un understandable, while she is being abused he is sleeping
 - In the morning she is dead, so he cuts her up and send her to the 12 tribes to get a reaction, a reaction he will get.

But you and I can't understand this story, because we live in a different time and we view people very differently today

- you see in these times women, wives, and especially concubines were literally seen as just property of the man – not the Lord's heart
 - And that idea was consistent in every culture until what??? – until Jesus
 - Jesus elevated the standing of women
- And people today will laugh at the idea but it is absolutely true
 - Look at the countries today where the gospel has not taken root

When I went to the middle East in college, there were about 10 bible college students mostly guys but a few girls and while we were in a Muslin area I had a guy approach me and tell me he would give me 3 camels for one of the those girls I was with – I said I'll take 4 camels – no – but the absurdity of that to us – that I as a man someone have owner over any female I'm around – its crazy, but they really still see women as property

This always happens when people do what is right in their own eyes and ignore the Bible

- and this is the problem I have with universities and what they teach and the whole idea of the feminist movement
 - it isn't I don't think woman should have rights, no way – but the idea that you get rid of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus and that will be good for mankind and especially woman – it is backward thinking
 - everywhere the gospel has taken hold of a society, women are elevated and rightfully so
 - and everywhere it has not gone, they are still trampled on
- And that is so apparent in our story

The Levite takes his dead concubine and cuts her up into 12 pieces and sends pieces of her to every tribe in Israel

- something must be done

- and what they do is chapters 20-21

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- read chapter 20

Everybody is doing what is right in their own eyes governmentally

- its start with Benjamin

- instead of delivering the wicked men of Gibeah who did this to this girl, they are going to do what is right in their own eyes and go to war against all of Israel

Then there is the rest of the tribes of Israel notice at first they don't ask God what He wants them to do

That would be having a King over you, no they are going to kill Benjamin, they just want to know who should go first

- They are having a façade of religiousness without really inquiring of the Lord
 - And if we are not careful we can do the same thing
 - We can give God two options pretending like we are seeking His will – do you want me to live here or there – do you want me to have this job or that one
 - instead we should be praying - Lord your will, my life, lead it – not my own understanding but by yours

Who should go up Lord – Let Judah lead

- And the children of Israel get whooped twice – why?
 - Well we don't really know for sure – but its seems to me there was a deeper issue – it wasn't that Benjamin was the only tribe doing what was right in their own eyes, everyone was
 - And before they dealt with Benjamin, they need to get right with God –
 - and this happens the third time – with sacrifice, that shows an acknowledgment of sin

This is the way God wants judgment, disciple to work

- with you and I individually what are we to do

“First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.” – Matthew 7:5

- we are to deal with the plank in our own eye, we need to repent - so you can see clearly to deal with other's sin
 - God wants to work on you as well as the other person you have to confront

That is the way it works with individuals and that is the way it needs to work with governments

- I so appreciated Billy Graham after September 11th, when everyone was of the opinion America is holy and we need to now deal with the evil
 - And don't misunderstand me – there is truth to that statement

But Billy Graham said, “Everyone is talking about God blessing America, America better start blessing the Lord”

- and that is right on
 - We need to take a deep look – not to see how we have offended terrorists
 - But to see how we have offended a holy God – how we say we are a nation under God – but we don't allow Him in our Schools, in our courts, in our stores
- America needs to deal with evil, I believe that is why we exist, but we need to deal with the evil within as well
 - And that is the lesson of this text
 - They are doing things their own way

So now – they go and take on the Benjamites – still not asking God if he wants to destroy in the first place

- but they destroy all but 600 men of a tribe that once numbered 45,600 (Numbers 26)
 - and then they realize that could be a problem
 - but once again instead of asking God – they decide to fix things themselves
 - lets read chapter 21 and we will be done...

Chapter 21:1-3

- First of all they blame God for getting into the situation – this is what we always seem to do – we go our own way, things don't work out – we blame God

It wasn't God's fault – it was because they were dumb

- This is always the case – this is good answer for counseling
 - “how come this happen” – because your dumb –I am really a great counselor
 - God told you to avoid that in the first place

God is nothing but plain oh down right good, truly psalm 73 – “God is good”

- You and I deserve a lot worse – why does anything good ever happen to me a sinner is the real question
 - They want to know – why did you allow this

But at least, verse 4-15, now they are coming to Lord

- but notice, they still don't wait upon the Lord
 - they move out into their own plan
 - notice what they do – more chaos

Nobody from Jabesh Gilied came up to help us

- notice they didn't ask why – they didn't ask why did this happen
 - they destroy everyone, men women children everyone but the virgins girls of marriable age – and give them to the men of Benjamin who survived

They didn't wait on God

- when you don't know what to do, don't
 - I have never been ashamed waiting upon God
 - But moving out ahead I have been
 - If you don't know what to do, don't, wait

But there is still a problem – verses 16-25

- there were 600 men, but only 400 virgins
 - oh no 200 men what do we do
 - oh these guys have a plan – oh great
- steal these ladies – then you didn't technically give them to the guys

I get asked should we allow our daughters to go to dances???

- I don't know – read this chapter, they might end up taken by some strange guys
 - In all seriousness – again parents where do you allow your kids to go???
 - Because if you allow them to go to dark places, can you blame God if they end up with a dark boyfriend or girlfriend???

Contrast that with Isaac who had a great wife

- And it was while he was meditating
 - And God blessed that so much
 - Maybe a Word to someone tonight

Confusion and Chaos

- because people were doing what was right in their own eyes
 - I'm so glad we have a King
 - I'm so glad - We have a book that gives insight into marriage, into family, into single life, into finances and into my schedule
- We have it, but it is a whole other thing to put yourself under it
 - Go for it church!!!