

07-17-01-An Unholy House on a Hill
lordship, idolatry, self-will, family
Judges 17

When the Lord is not on the throne, spiritual chaos rules.

INTRODUCTION: (Text for Scripture Reading)

–Today’s situation is like that in the *Book of Judges*: Israel had a great spiritual heritage, but false religious thinking had saturated society. In those days, it was an array of Canaanite fertility cults. Today it’s a deadly mixture of religiosity and relativism. By disregarding divine authority, people make choices based on false standards. **HOM.idea.**

–Judges 17 gives a bird's eye view of this situation, and shows us three areas that are damaged when the Lord is off the throne . . .

I. Family Relationships Get Deformed– v.1-3, *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!” 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.”*

A. Here was the son of a single mom (no dad in the story), and he was an only child (no brothers or sisters are mentioned):

1. His responsibility was to look out for his mother’s welfare, yet he was stealing from her.
2. Since he was the sole heir anyway, his theft was like that of the Prodigal Son who was stealing from the future.
3. He broke two commandments [“honor your parents” and “don’t steal”], but returning the stolen money wasn’t from fearing God’s wrath. (By his own admission, it was prompted by his mother’s curse.)

B. This single mom knew what kind of son she had raised:

1. When her money was taken, she cursed the person who stole it, making sure her son heard the curse (probably because she knew who the thief was and who she was cursing).
2. After he returned the silver, she said, “The LORD bless you, my son!” but immediately dedicated it “to make a carved image and a cast idol.” (If there was a blessing, she was turning it into a family curse.)
3. This woman, in her false view of God, literally idolized her silver

by turning *two hundred shekels* of it [she’d *consecrated* all of it] into a *family heirloom* that was a *religious abomination*:

- a. A “*carved image*”—a beautiful house decoration to boast about
- b. and a “*cast idol*”—an alluring item to attract others to worship

TRANS: This *only son* and *single mother* had double responsibilities: *she* to play the role of two parents in setting a good example, and *he* to protect his single mom and to preserve the integrity of his home as its future leader. Both failed, because **when the Lord is not on the throne, spiritual chaos rules** in a *home*.... but also in *religious faith*....

II. (when the Lord is off the throne) Faith in God Is Defiled– v.4-6, 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. 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.

A. They broke the first three commandments [*servicing other gods, making idols, and worshipping them*]:

1. Idols replace the real God with popular ideas (The phrase: “*That’s not how I see God*” is the platform for modern idolatry.)
2. Idolatry elevates conceptual images of God [bulls in fertility cults] and diminish His Personhood [Today’s “*The Force be with you!*”].
3. Personal idols allow people to sanction sinful behavior with religious language (“*God led me to do it. . .*”).

B. Look at the process of idol-making: it turns our resources into eye-pleasing images (Who are today’s idol-smiths? fashion designers? plastic surgeons? Hollywood? the advertizement industry?)

C. Israel promoted the growth of idolatry, as we do today:

1. They built “shrines” to draw others to join them in false worship (Today, we hear politically-correct slogans that have no regard the moral standards set by God.)
2. Holy worship was replaced by using idols for divination (Today horoscopes and the latest research replace God’s guidance.)
3. Micah installed his son as a priest, [lit.] “filling his hand” with a distorted view in God. (*What’s in the hands of today’s children?* It should be “the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom.”)

TRANS: When the Lord is not on the throne, spiritual chaos rules, both in the *family* and *faith*. And finally, *when God is not on the throne,*

III. Future Success Is Defeated— v.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."

A. This Levite left *Bethlehem* ["the house of bread"]:

1. He was called by birth to serve the Lord, but got *caught up*, like so many others, in the surrounding culture's popular idolatry.
2. He traded his heritage in Moses the Lawgiver for adoption into the household of Micah the Lawbreaker.

B. Micah was hoping to increase his chances for success:

1. Unconcerned about the Levite's character, he thought a *real priest* would give his shrine more credibility.
2. Perhaps he feared a curse for his idolatry and thought "A *Levite priest would balance it out*" (a false view of Yin & Yang theory).
3. He **wasn't** trying to please God but *to use Him* to reach his goal.

CONCLUSION:

–**When the Lord is not on the throne, spiritual chaos rules.** Today's world is saturated with idolatry: *false gods* are invited into the home, into the church, into the heart. God's plan for family life is deformed; biblical faith is defiled; future success and happiness are defeated.

–In **Jud 18**, Micah's unholy home is forcefully stripped of its *priest* and *idols* by a Dante war party. (But, was this a *tragedy* or an *opportunity*?)

–Are there areas in our homes, our faith, our goals where Christ should be King, but where His rule has been neglected, or even ignored?

–There's no middle ground. There's either the path where Christ rules the life or one where spiritual chaos rules.

Judges 17:1-13 (NIV)

1Now a man named Micah from the hill country of Ephraim
2said 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!"

3When 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."

4So 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.

5Now this man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and some idols and installed one of his sons as his priest.

6In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.

7A young Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, who had been living within the clan of Judah,

8left 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.

9Micah 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."

10Then 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."

11So the Levite agreed to live with him, and the young man was to him like one of his sons.

12Then Micah installed the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in his house.

13And Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since this Levite has become my priest."