

## EXPOSITION OF JUDGES

Message #24

Judges 18:1-31

A few weeks ago, I was told a story by a man in our church, who was actually connected to the story in a remote way. There was a man that he knew who had a good job and good family and seemingly a good life. He was a religious man who went to church. He had never gone to a casino before but he decided to go just one time. One time was all it took. He seemed to have fun. He seemed to have a chance of winning some money. He seemed to enjoy himself. He became completely addicted and in a matter of a few months, he lost his family, his house, his job and his money. He was actually thinking about taking his own life. Everything he had lived for was gone. He threw it all away for a few hours of what he thought would be some pleasure in a gambling casino.

When we come to Judges 18, we come to a tribe who throws their inheritance away for a life of ease and they have a false minister telling them it is the right thing to do. They are not interested in obeying God or His Word and they end up tossing their inheritance completely away. They lose it all and here is the story of how it all happened.

**WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE MOVE AWAY FROM GOD’S WORD AND DO WHAT IS WRONG, LIFE MAY SEEM TO BE GOOD AND SUCCESSFUL FOR AWHILE, BUT IN THE END GOD’S PEOPLE WILL LOSE THEIR INHERITANCE.**

There are many churches right now breaking away from reverent worship and clear and careful teaching of God’s Word. Many of these churches seem to be flourishing and prospering. The numbers are huge and the budgets are big. There will come a day when many of these churches will be spit out of the mouth of Jesus Christ. They will lose everything just like the tribe of Dan.

When you live in a society in which everyone is doing what they want, proper problem solving skills are lost completely. In **verse 1**, we come face to face with two major problems:

**PROBLEM #1** – Israel had no king. **18:1a**

This reveals to us that there was no solid leadership to guide Israel. **The truth is God should have been their King and the Word of God should have been their guidebook.** They had the best king in the world- the King of Kings. However, they did not care about the God of the Bible. No one was interested in the Scriptures. No one was interested in true worship. No one cared about what God’s Word even said. No one was leading Israel to even think about God and His Word and His promises. Any tribe of Israel could have turned to God and His Word, but Israel was so far removed from that type of thinking that she was not about to do that.

We are moving toward another political election. So far, as near as I can tell there is one man who seems to make no bones about the fact that he is a Christian. He was asked whether or not he thought it made any difference whether a person believes in evolution or if God created the world. He said it didn’t make any difference because “I don’t think that’s relevant to turning this economy around and protecting this nation” (*World Magazine*, Oct. 22, 2011, p. 27). We are living in a day just like the Judges. There doesn’t seem to be any political leader who wants to turn this nation back to God and His Word.

**PROBLEM #2** – Dan had no inheritance . **18:1b**

Let's be real clear on this point. **Dan did have an inheritance, because God had given Dan one.** God had given them an inheritance between Ephraim and Judah that stretched all the way to the Mediterranean Sea (Joshua 19:40-48). Dan refused to trust God and drive out the Amorites, and as a result they buckled to the pressure and moved in an eastern direction up into the hills (**Judges 1:34**).

Because of the oppressions that had taken place between the Amorites (1:34-35) and the Philistines (Judges 13:1; 14:4; 15:11), the tribe of Dan had been forced to move in an eastern direction and they ended up in the territory of Benjamin and Ephraim.

We may recall that back in the days of Deborah and Barak the Danites didn't lift a finger to help Israel do anything. They just sat in their ships by the sea as if nothing were wrong (5:17). They loved the life of ease. They didn't want any hassles. They didn't want to have to take a stand for right, so they just went along with the flow. They gave up their inheritance.

Things for the Danites now were cramped. Samson had been from their family line (13:2), and the Danites decided they needed more room and some new territory so they decided to use some of the Samson momentum to expand. Both the Amorites had been routed and also the Philistines; they decided it was time for some land expansion.

**So in all reality Dan did have an inheritance, but what you will see is Dan is not content with it and can and will throw their inheritance away.**

**SOLUTION #1** – Dan decided to send spies to find some land to take. **18:2-10**

Now this tribe of Dan is not interested in taking the land given to them by God. Dan could have repented of their failure to trust God and then gone back to their own land and asked God to give them their land. But instead of doing that they decided to go on the prowl for some easy pickings. They wanted to take something someone else had. That is one of the real problems today- people want what others have and they will do whatever it takes to get it.

There are protests right now all over the world by a bunch of losers who want to take what others have. Instead of trusting God and getting a job and working hard, they want to take what others have accumulated.

Someone has wisely observed there are three main philosophies of life:

- 1) What is mine is mine and I'll keep it.
- 2) What is yours is mine and I'll take it.
- 3) What is mine is yours and I'll share it.

These Danites opted for philosophy number two. They decided to steal someone else's land in some other place as long as it looked like a good place to live.

Truth is there are many people who will do about anything except what is right before God. They aren't interested in God's Word or will as long as it profits them.

Seven Danite action facts are brought out:

**Action Fact #1** - Five spies are sent and then end up at Micah's house. **18:2**

The five men/spies were five valiant warriors and they headed out to explore the land, and they came to Micah's house and decided to stay there for a night. Notice they did not go to Shiloh to consult with real priests about the will of God. They are not really interested in God's Word or God's will; they are interested in their own will. They just took off on their own whims.

**Action Fact #2** - Five spies hear and see the Levite staying at Micah's house. **18:3**

When the text says they "recognized the voice," they probably recognized the southern Judean accent. The Hebrew word "voice" (qol) is one that refers to an accent or sound that they detected (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 727). As one writer said they probably heard him say "Shalom ya all."

They saw the young priest and they wanted to know what he was doing there. They were somewhat shocked to see him. They realized this was a priest who shouldn't be out here. But it didn't bother them that this priest was out of the will of God and not doing the will of God at all, because they didn't concern themselves with doing God's will either.

**Action Fact #3** - The priest tells them how he has been hired to be Micah's priest. **18:4**

Basically he says I am a priest for hire and Micah gave me a good job. Notice he says "I'm a paid priest for Micah" and he does not say "I am a priest for God." He was Micah's priest, not God's. You would think he would be embarrassed to even say this, but this is how corrupt the religious leadership had become.

**Action Fact #4** - The spies ask the priest to ask God if they will prosper searching for land. **18:5**

This is what people out of touch with God focus on: prosperity. They do not focus on seeking first the Kingdom of God, they focus on their own prosperity.

Do you understand what is happening here? God has already revealed in His Word what His will is for Dan, but they are not interested in God's Word or will and so they ask a false religious leader to tell them something which is actually contrary to God's will. Now this priest is completely out of the will of God and they want him to determine God's will.

If you and I do not use the Word of God as our authority, we can end up making crazy decisions thinking it is God's will, when in fact it is just the opposite of God's will.

There are ministers who will tell you just the opposite of what God's Word and will is. For example, at midnight on September 21, 2011, a Navy lieutenant married his homosexual partner because the Pentagon now allows chaplains to perform same sex marriages. Those chaplains in the military should be telling homosexuals the truth. That it is an evil, abominable sin that will bring them the wrath of God, but instead some chaplains are telling them there is nothing wrong with being a homosexual, and are marrying them. These are religious leaders telling the world just the opposite of the truth of God's Word. That is exactly what this priest is doing.

**Action Fact #5** - The priest tells the spies they have God's blessings on them. **18:6**

Now here is the thing. None of this has any of God's blessing in it. Yet, when you initially look at what happens, it would appear as if the priest is a prophetic genius. The fact is this priest is just making stuff up. He is not in tune with God in any way. He does not know God's Word or will. This did not in any way correspond to the will of God or Word of God for the tribe of Dan.

**Action Fact #6** - The spies come to Laish and see some good land . **18:7**

The land of Laish was lush. It was about 100 miles north of where Dan was camped. It is land that sets in the northern most sector of the Promised Land. This land is located twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Kinnereth, better known as the Sea of Galilee, and twenty-seven miles east of Tyre and the Mediterranean Sea. It was good fertile land and it would be easy to take. There were a few peaceful Sidonians living in the land, but not enough to intimidate this tribe. This would be the perfect target for Dan for it would be an easy score. They could kill the people and take the land.

**There is no greater danger to the life of the Christian than the love of an easy life at the expense of the love of an obedient life.** Someone has wisely said there is no greater danger faced by believers in the United States as much as the danger of ease. **Give most people the choice and they will choose the easy way rather than the right way.**

Why stand up and fight for God and His Word when you can just enjoy an easy existence with no hassles? Why purpose to live sacrificially when you can just quiet down, settle down and enjoy life? But I love something Gary Inrig said, "No lover of the cross can retire from God's mission to the world" (*Hearts of Iron, Feet of Clay*, p. 279).

**Action Fact #7** - The spies return home and report they have found the perfect land to take. **18:8-10**

The spies came back home and said let's go attack Laish and take the land. When Moses sent spies to scout out the Promised Land, all but two came back and said we can't take the land, which was God's will. Now the spies come back and say we can take this land easy, and it is not God's will. They really felt this was God's will and said let's go take it because this is God's will. The Danites had a full confidence that God had given them the land. This is not God's will. People can convince themselves that they are doing God's will when in fact they are doing just the opposite of God's will.

**SOLUTION #2** – Dan decides to steal Micah's idols and priest. **18:11-26**

According to **verses 11-13**, six hundred men with weapons of war took off for Laish. They first camped at "Kieriath-jearim" in Judah at a campsite they named "camp of Dan" (Mahaneh-dan). They broke camp and went to the hill country of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah.

While they were at Micah's house, the five spies informed the other warriors that Micah had his own Levite priest and that he had his own shrine place for worship. According to **verses 16-17**, the 600 armed warriors stood by the entrance of the gate and the five spies went into the shrine and took Micah's idols.

When the priest saw them taking the idols, he confronted them and asked them what they were doing (18:18). The warriors told him to be silent and then they invited him to join them because working for a large number of people is better than working for one family (18:19).

All of a sudden the priest who is confronting the Danites now is offered a job and wants to join them. **Now notice the priest's response in verse 20, "his heart was glad."** This is what he had been looking for. He changed his tune once he realized this would mean a job promotion and pay promotion for him. This priest has never been interested in doing God's will. This is all about him having a job. So he decided to accept and go with them. These Danites liked this priest because he told them what they wanted to hear. We may recall they asked him if they would have success and he told them they would (18:6).

This minister is getting a nice promotion out of all of this. He now has many more people, more pay and a bigger place of worship. It is all evil religion. None of this is sanctioned by God.

If you are a fake minister you can land yourself a really good paying job if you tell people what they want to hear. Look at Rob Bell the heretic from hell. He is now leaving Grand Rapids for Los Angeles to work on a television drama. He will tell you he is following the leading of the Lord. He has never accurately expounded God's Word, but he has sure generated big numbers.

While we were on vacation we stumbled on an ad for ministry opportunities in the south. You should have seen the advertisements. Not one emphasized the need to carefully expound God's Word. There were big job openings if you were willing to promote some liberal agenda. If you could function as a CEO manager of a church corporation, you were offered a huge package.

It is still true today, if you tell most churches that God loves them just as they are and God wants to entertain them and prosper them, they will give you the job. If you are likeable and tell them God wants them happy and wealthy and won't ever judge them, you'll do just fine. But the moment you preach about sin and the need for repentance because of the pending judgment, in many instances, you will find yourself out of a job.

I have experienced this personally and pastorally in Pocatello, Idaho. I accepted a call of God to go there and teach the Word of God. I started teaching God's Word systematically four times a week and there were people in leadership who so hated it, because their toes were being stepped on; they wanted to run us out of town.

One of them actually said we don't want to come to church to learn the Bible at a deep level. They hated any mention of rewards or loss of rewards. They spearheaded a movement to try to get us out of there, which didn't work. This mambe pambe minister in Judges would have done well in Pocatello.

According to **verse 21**, the Danites must have thought that Micah's family may come after them because they stole their idols and their priest, so they put the women, children and livestock up front and kept the 600 soldiers in the back to form a rear guard as they headed for Laish. Sure enough, when Micah found out what had happened he put together his own family military force and he went after the Danites (18:22), and he caught up with them.

According to **verses 23-26**, Micah confronted the Danites and they basically said shut your mouth or we will destroy you and your family, so Micah turned and went back to his house. No one here knows anything about the Word of God or will of God. Not one person in this story actually thinks about God's Word or God's will. Everyone does what is right in their own eyes.

**SOLUTION #3** – Dan takes Laish and sets up a place for idol worship. **18:27-31**

We need to carefully understand this critical point- **success in religion is not a sign of true righteousness. Success in this world, in church, or in anything does not mean one is doing what is right before God.**

The sons of Dan took the idol and the priest and they came to Laish and they killed all the people and burned down the city. This is cold-blooded murder done in the name of God. **Verse 28** informs us that the people of Laish had no chance and the tribe of Dan settled in and rebuilt the city and called it home.

They named the city Dan and they set up their idol and they made Jonathan the priest. They think this is all because of their idol worship. They think God has blessed them. They think they are right with God. The fact is true worship was in the house of God at Shiloh located nineteen miles north of Jerusalem, but these Danites set up their own religious worship with their own pet priest.

It all appears as if this is all working out great for Dan. But nothing could be further from the truth. Dan is not following God's Word or will and not doing God's Word or will and they will pay a severe price.

**First** of all, Dan did not take what God had given them; they took what God had not given them. This was not the land God had given to Dan. You will be the happiest when right with God.

**Second**, in the list of the tribes and land inheritances in I Chronicles, Dan is missing. God will not bless Dan because they do not care about Him or His Word.

**Third**, in Revelation 7, in the list of the tribes of the 144,000 Jews, Dan is missing.

They chose a life of ease and had it for a while, but in the end they end up with no inheritance. They have a good, plush, temporal existence. They have a seemingly peaceful existence. They have their religion with their own temple and priest. They have it all, but they lost it all.

In Ephesians 5:3-5, Paul challenges Grace Age believers to not throw away their inheritance through filthy immoral things. Dan was a true tribe of Israel and Dan threw their inheritance away; don't you make the same mistake.

We need to purpose to carefully understand and obey God's truth even if it means it isn't easy, because in the end those who honor God, God honors.